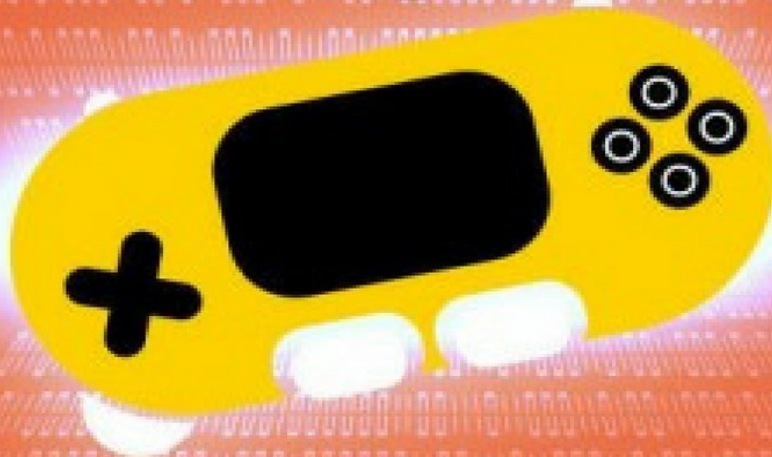


# 게임 마켓

손인성 현대판타지 소설

# 1983

# 1



# GAME MARKET

# 1983

BOOK 01

*Son InSung*

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Game Market 1983

(게임 마켓 1983)

by

**Son InSung**

(손인성)

# Synopsis

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“Young man... if you could go back in time, what period would you like to be in?”

Kang Junhyuk, a game developer in the year 2015, meets an old man in a run-down arcade store and travels to the year 1983, the era of retro gaming...

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# Volume 01

# Chapter 1 : A Run-Down Game Store (1)

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“About this project, no one has any objections about steering it towards being mobile-oriented, right?”

‘No, I disagree with that, you bastard...’

However, like always, I kept my thoughts to myself. God damn...

“By the way, for this project, how much time do we have to make the final deadline?”

“The beta will go live next May, so won’t we have to finish it by February?”

‘What? They’re giving us only 6 months to overhaul the current project and remake it from the start? Are they playing with us?’

I’m boiling with anger. The company CEO has been picking his nose and stupidly nodding his head from his seat. He probably thinks that with just 2 months of working on the game, after about a month of advertising the game, the money would start rolling in.

No way that’s happening. I can bet my 10 fingers that this project will be an utter failure.

At that moment, one of the directors must have seen the disapproval showing on my face and opened his mouth.

“Mr. Junhyuk?”

“Yes.”

“Do you have a problem? Why is your expression like this from awhile ago?”

“Director Han, the concept of this project is completely different from what we planned out in the beginning. The game will charge the users serious money; if we release the game like this, the users will be definitely displeased. This won't fare well for our company's image.”

As I said that, Mr. Han looked at me with a wrinkled eyebrow. He has the habit of wrinkling his eyebrows like that whenever someone even slightly criticizes his project.

“I even extended the deadline of the last project for you. You should remember exactly how that turned out..”

‘F\*\*\*. You interfered in the middle of that and overturned everything!’

I had a ton of things to say, but I'm not stupid enough voice my opinions. All that would happen is that CEO, who is picking his nose, will remain oblivious, and Mr. Han isn't the type of person that would stick up for me either.

“As you all know, the gaming industry of our country consists mainly of mobile games. The PC games that we thought would go on forever have rapidly decreased in popularity. Anyway, the focus must be on mobile. In the past, ‘NetBlue’ had about the same revenue as us but they instantly grew to a conglomerate in the top 5 rankings after releasing one mobile game. You guys don’t feel anything after seeing this? You don’t have any thoughts on how to make the company hit the jackpot?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Director Han speaks well~”

The CEO sided with Mr. Han.

NetBlue... They hit the jackpot after releasing a mobile version of “Blue Marble”, but after a while, due to a scam with the billing process being exposed, the users left the game.

“And the company, GameTown, which was smaller than us, is releasing new titles every quarter. However, look at us. We haven’t released anything new for the past two quarters. Does this make any sense?”

The CEO agreed with Director Han again.

“Yeah, that’s very good.”

The more I hear the executives speak, the more baffled I become. For the last project, if we strictly followed the initial plan, we would have finished last April. However, everything went south



when changes were constantly made in an attempt to increase the potential revenue for the game. The project was inevitably delayed due to these constant updates.

And on top of that, the game was switched to a mobile platform so the effort that we put into this project, since last november, was lost. Director Han was in an arrogant state with the CEO backing him up.

“I was thinking it would be best for the Team Leader of this project, Mr. Kang Junhyuk, to drop out. How about moving to the customer service department for awhile? You like interacting with the users, right?”

“What?”

“Mr. Junhyuk, the kind of games you make are too player-oriented. In the perspective of the company, it doesn't make much money at all. We're not some kind of a charity service. If you make a free download game, you should be thinking of ways to extract money, not showering the players with free items. Anyways, I'll personally lead this project. Mr. Junhyuk can go to another department for now. Or you can just stay at the customer service department and take care of the players forever.”

It's obvious that the result would be garbage; you want me to clean up your trash?

And the fact that a design Director who doesn't know s\*\*\* about programming is going to take charge...

The faces of the programmers for this project were ugly.

“What’s the problem with everyone’s expressions? If you have any complaints, speak up now. I’ll put you in customer service along with Mr. Junhyuk.”

The room was silent after Director Han spoke.

It was because getting transferred to the customer service department was the most humiliating experience for programmers.

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“Fuck, I can’t do this anymore, Team Leader. I can’t work under Director Han, that bastard.”

End of the shift.

I started a conversation with Mr. Lee, whom I had a deep friendship with. The hour hand on my wristwatch was now pointing at 10 pm. Phew... To think that I would be working overtime the day before my department transfer.

After I organized my belongings in a box, I came out of the No. 2 Inventions Office.

“Team Leader, are you really going to leave like this without saying anything?”

“What if I do say something? Do you think Director Han would listen to me?”

“But you should at least try.”

“It’s fine. I’m done with this. The current CEO and the past CEOs’ mentalities are completely opposite of each other. Didn’t you see what he was saying next to Director Han?”

“You’re too much, Team Leader Han. If you persuaded me to join the company to make a great game together, then you should have at least stayed in the Team Leader position.”

“Then you want to follow me to the customer service department?”

“That’s not what I’m saying~!!”

“I’m really sorry. I didn’t know the situation would go this far. “

“You must be in a terrible mood, I stepped out of my position and vented my anger.”

“But it’s a relief that at least you are staying. Cooperate with Director Han and accomplish the next project well...”

“Yes, I will try my best.”

“If you have time, do you want to grab a beer together?”

“Ah, because of my wife, beer at this hour is a little...?”

“Smack! That’s fine. Alright then, I’ll see you later.”

(TL: Lip smacking sfx, not hitting...)

“Have a good night, Team Leader.”

After saying goodbye to Mr. Lee, I felt the cold night air as I stepped outside. Is autumn coming already? I stopped and looked back at the company as I was heading to the parking lot.

I’m 34 this year. I have 15 years of experience as a programmer, but tomorrow, I’ll go to work as a customer service representative... I’m speechless.

I thought I could make make any game I wanted when I first entered this gaming company, but I was busy making other people’s games for the first 8 years. This was no different after I got promoted to Team Leader.

The games that I made, instead of showing what ways my game will be entertaining, I had to give a presentation on how much

profit the game would bring in compared to the production costs.

In the end, the games that I made were not big hits. Of course that was to be expected... while in the process of developing the game, many people added their inputs so the end result was completely different from what was planned in the beginning.

On top of that, due to the deadline being rushed on many occasions, the games were often riddled with bugs and server problems.

Recent trends in releasing a mobile game was always speed. After releasing a game for 2 weeks, the developers would make a decision on whether or not the game would be a hit or not and decide whether or not to discontinue the service. If it seemed that the game would be a hit, the industry would copy the game, make slight changes to it and argue that everyone else copied their program.

It was as if I was watching the Korean version of the 'Atari Shock'.

In the 1980s, the American game industry went into a great recession, and it was known as one of the darkest moments in gaming history. Numerous games that didn't go through a proper testing period flooded into the market. An example of this was the game developed by Atari called E.T.

The game, Extra Terrestrial, was developed in 5 weeks to be released in time for Christmas and needless to say, it was a

disaster. Millions of unsold game packages were dumped in the middle of a desert in New Mexico.

An industry of almost 3 billion dollars shrank to about a hundred million after this incident and was known as the 'Atari Shock.' The current situation in Korea was almost no different from back then.

(TL: Atari owned about 80% of the gaming industry's shares so it's understandable)

"There's no one waiting for me back home. Should I grab a beer for myself in a bar near my house?"

I grabbed the car keys from my pocket and headed towards the parking lot. I'm 34 for this year, and I'm still single.

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Was this one of the benefits of being single? I parked my car at my house and got myself drunk with 2 bottles of Soju at the nearest bar. Yeah, how could I not get myself drunk on a day such as this~ Keke.

In my drunken stupor, I got myself completely hammered and roamed the streets while cackling to myself. Tomorrow, I will be working a completely different job than game development. Fucking hell... my dream of being a game developer is ending like this?

-PewPewPew~

At that moment the sound of a beeping tune caused me to stop in my tracks.

-BloopBleepBloopBloopBleepBleep

It was like a sound you would hear from an old arcade shooting game, but my surroundings were nothing but old shops.

-Pew~ PewPew~

However, I hear this for sure. This is the sound of a missile shooting from an old arcade shooting game... Being immersed in my childhood memories, I hastily look around my surroundings and chased the noise.

-Boing~ Boing~

This time it's the SFX that Super Marigee makes when he jumps? Perhaps there is an arcade around here? However, from what I know, arcade rooms should have disappeared by the 90s. On the notion that there was an arcade, I hastened my footsteps toward the noise. It might sound funny, but these beeping noises were like a memory of an old pop song to me.

How long have I wandered around like this after midnight? A brightly lit store in a remote alley came into my view. On the glass display was an old TV box. The display contained rows of game

cartridges packed together.

“Welcome to my shop.”

Inside the store, a gray haired old man stared at me while smiling.

“He-Hello, senior.”



## Chapter 2 : A Run-Down Game Store (2)

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“A young man like you looks like you’re on your death’s bed? What’s the problem?”

“I’m just tired because of work-related stuff. How did Senior collect all these retro games? This could almost be considered a museum?”

The tiny little store was filled with all kinds of game-related stuff. None of the games were modern. Instead, the items were popular retro game titles from the 80s and 90s. However, seeing this display, a quiet excitement welled up within me as if I had gone back to my childhood.

Especially the games that made me stay up all night to beat. From ‘Trial of the Ninja’ to ‘Final Frontier’, ‘Dragon Warrior’, etc... were all displayed without a speck of dust; it was as if they had just come out of the production line.

“Hehehe~ What do you think? Are you tempted?”

“You’re selling this right?”

“Of course, I put them here to sell them. The person who buys them will be the new owner~”

“How much are they?”

“Just give me two dollars per game.”

“Tw-two dollars!? Senior, these types of vintage items go on sale on the internet for hundreds of dollars. Especially this one!!”

I grabbed a shining golden case from the game cartridges and held it out. ‘Muscleman’, once called the destroyer of friendships; this golden case was an ultra rare item in Japan where only 8 copies were made. This item was recently sold for 30,000 Yen in an auction in Japan.

However, that was not all. A mini car game that was handed out at a Nintendo summer camp that was rumored to have only 100 copies in the entire world was being openly displayed here.

Each and every game here were items that could be sold for unbelievably high prices.

“Young man, I can tell you like these games.”

“Of course. That’s why I’m making games at this age~”

“Young man, you make games? Wow~ That’s amazing.”

That was only until yesterday. I swallowed these words and smiled sheepishly at the old man. He must have liked that so he gave a hearty chuckle with deep wrinkles paved on his face.

“Ah, I miss this. The games from this period were truly good...”

I picked up one of the cartridges on the side and gave a bitter smile. The now-deceased past president of Mintendo, Kawata Satoshi’s masterpiece that he made in his younger days, Balloon Fight.

Using 3 balloons to fly around the air and pop the opponent’s balloons, this was one of the games that I used to pull all nighters with when my friend came over. One time, I fought with my friend over this game so much that I didn’t talk to him for a month...

Balloon Fight was the first game that used the effect of “Inertia due to acceleration”. This concept was such an interesting concept that it was used in the running motion of Super Marigee.

“Balloon Fight~ that is truly a masterpiece. You have an eye for these things.”

“Is it alright if I look around a little more, Senior?”

“Go ahead, there are no customers anyway so take your time.”

“Thank you.”

I started to look around the tiny store when one game console caught my eye.

“Could... this be?”

To my reaction, the old man who was resting both his arms on the glass display looked at me with a peculiar smile. The item I picked up was called Game & Watch.

(TL: visual of the game & watch  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game\\_%26\\_Watch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game_%26_Watch))

“Wow... to think that I would see this again...”

I carefully opened the Game & Watch like a treasure.

This device was the pioneer of handheld gaming devices and the role model for the current Mintendo.

“Haha~ Is that to your liking?”

“Of course, Senior. By the way, I’ve never seen this model of the Game & Watch before. When I was little, I remember begging my parents and collected the entire series; but, this is the first time I’m seeing this model.”

“That’s a given... That model is the only one in the entire world.”

“What? The only one? How is something as rare as this in a place like this... No, I’m not disrespecting Senior’s store, but a unique model like this should be in the Mintendo headquarters as a commemoration.”

“Who said anything? A young man like you got all worked up~  
Haha~”

“Ahaha... But this is really cool. A unique model of Game & Watch... can I try this out?”

“The batteries are in there so you can try it out right away. Go ahead.”

“Ah, thank you.”

With Senior’s permission, I immediately opened the lid and turned the game on.

-Ding Ding Ding Ding~~

The system started up along with the theme music. I walked towards the headlamps to see the screen better because the Game & Watch had the stop animation technology; it did not have a backlight function, so it was impossible to see the screen in a dark place.

-The Employee’s Game-

That was the name of this Game & Watch model. The Game & Watch was created by the developer, Gunpei Yokoi, who passed away in a car accident. At that time period, games were geared

towards little children, so titles like Donkey Kom, Legend of Karin, and DragonBall were popular; however, a name like that was strange for a game geared towards children.

“Do you know how play it?”

“I can figure it out with my instincts.”

The Game & Watch was made for 5~6 year olds so the controls were not hard at all. There were the right and left arrow keys and a confirm button.

The main character of the game was an employee of a company who met with clients and placed a report on his desk, and tried to get the approval of the boss; every action was displayed through the stop animation effect.

The point of the game was to move rapidly from left to right and connect the clients with the boss. The interesting thing was that the time you had to meet the client was delayed or, suddenly, the boss switched his spot, so the MC couldn't obtain the approval that controlled the tempo of the game.

‘This was pretty well made.’

“You have a great sense for gaming ~”

“I played this a lot when I was a kid, and I already understood the system... By the way, this game character is a lot like me.”

“Employees are all the same. Haha...”

“That’s right. It’s depressing that I’m overworked even in a game.”

“Is that right? Haha~”

After playing the game for awhile, I closed the lid and returned the device to the old man. As I did that, the old man intently stared at the Game & Watch in my hand.

“You said that you make games? What type of games are you making?”

“The games that I made until now were online PC games, but there are so many mobile games out there; thus, it’s hard to make a big hit compared to the past. It must be enjoyable in under 5 minutes, emphasizing almost no effort on the player’s part.”

“Isn’t that a part of the passage of time? You have to give the players what they’re looking for.”

“I don’t think that’s true. The games that were popular when I was little are still popular with plenty of players playing it on consoles all around the world. A game won’t be popular because it’s free. The most important thing is the quality of the game.”

What am I saying to an old man? However, I couldn't stop the discharge of thoughts that I harbored in my mind for the past few months.

"I can't deny that in our country, the most popular types of games that our country's young people enjoy are mobile games. However, we, at least, have to give the players a variety of choices. Spewing out similar games and saying, "try it because it's free"; however, there's no such thing as an ending. Additionally, if you don't want to put any effort into the game, then pay money. Is it right to operate like this? There has to be an end to every start. However, today... garbage games that have no ending are flooding this world. Starting a story and, if the money isn't flowing in, they discontinue the server, say sorry and that's the end of it. How does this make sense?"

"Hm... you speak well young man..."

"Huff... Huff... I was too worked up. I apologize, Senior."

"No, no. Your words feel like a breath of fresh air. Yes, a game developer should at least have this opinion."

"I feel better after venting my thoughts to you."

"Is that right? Haha~ Look here young man; if you could travel to the past, what period would you go back to."

"What? Ah, I don't know. This is not a thought invoking



question, but I'm engrossed by this idea. If I could go back to the past, then 1983 would be good."

"Why is that?"

"The reasoning behind this is that was the period after the Atari Shock and the 2nd generation Mintendo consoles were released. This period also had an overflow of ambitious young game developers."

"Really? Haha~ that's right. The 1980s was a lot of fun. That time period was also when the definition of the term 'Video Game' was being developed. If you could really go back to that time period, what would you do? Would you develop games like you are now?"

I thought deeply about the question of the old man for a moment. As if we were playing chess, the old man was watching me think with a sincere smile on his face.

"No. I wouldn't be a developer."

"Hmm? Why not? Do you hate games now?"

"No. I don't think I would be able to make the games that I truly want to make as a game developer."

"Hmm? What do you mean by that?"

“If I could bring the knowledge I have right now to that period, I would want to make a gaming console. I want to make a gaming company that would rival the current Nintendo and Sony.”

“Aha~ You want to be your own boss and create the games that you want to make? That’s a good idea.~ Incredible.”

“Is that so? Haha... I’m excited just thinking about this. It was enjoyable talking to you, Senior. I feel like a huge knot in my chest just got untangled.”

“Why? Leaving so soon?”

“I have to go to work tomorrow. Don’t all workers have to be on time?”

“Yeah, should I close up too? The time is too late.”

“Are you planning on closing the shop? Then I’ll help you clean the shop.”

“Really? You have good manners young man. Then can you bring in the sign post outside?”

“Yes, of course.”

As I left the store, I stared at the Game & Watch console that I unconsciously brought outside with me. Oh no, I should put it back

right now, so he doesn't suspect me of stealing. How precious must it be that it is the only one in the world.

As I turned my head around thinking that...

“What...?”

The view of a tightly closed shutter door was in front of my eyes.

“What is this? Senior? Senior~!!”

It felt as if I was dreaming. A brightly lit store moments ago suddenly changed into a dark building.

Am I dreaming right now?

I pinched my cheeks, but I definitely felt the pain. It's not like I was tricked by a ghost so how is this possible? But... in my right hand...

I turned my head to look at the Game & Watch console that was still in my hands.

“What is... happening right now?”

# Chapter 3 : A Run-Down Game Store (3)

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-Shaaaaa~~

I arrived at my house and finished showering with hot water. What happened just before? I thought that I was drunk and hallucinated everything up in my mind, but the Game & Watch that I got from the old man was still laying on the living room table when I came out of the shower.

“That’s weird...”

I sat down on the sofa wearing casual attire, and I picked up the Game & Watch off the table. The big hand was pointing to 1 on the clock. It would be best to sleep quickly, but after this baffling event, I don’t think I can fall asleep so easily.

-Thwack

The lid of the Game & Watch satisfyingly opened. The fact that the current Nintendo 3GS double screen design was copied from this very Game & Watch was well known.

‘This is simple to play but this is definitely fun... Yes, this is what a game should be.’

-Beep. Beep, BeepBeep.

The monotonous beeps rang throughout the living room.

I didn't even turn on the TV and all my attention was focused on the game. At first, the progression of the game was slow enough to make me yawn. However, as my score passed 100,000, the tempo of the game got faster little by little. The clients delayed the meeting time more and more, and the boss kept leaving his position.

"The boss in this game is just like my boss in real life, hehe."

As I saw the client on the screen arriving late for the appointment time again, I added,

"This bastard here is the same as Mr. Han, no doubt about it. Setting the meeting times on a whim and always arriving late..."

I can't lose here. I can't lose. I moved my fingers as if they were possessed and controlled the character to finish the tasks.

I couldn't help but gasp in surprise at how the game design made it possible to intuitively learn the game without a tutorial.

-BeepBeepBeep! BeepBeep! Beep! BeepBeepBeep!

The beeping music got increasingly faster along with my hand movements. The score already passed 300,000 and the character was now crazily teleporting left and right like a martial arts master.

‘A little more, almost there...’

-Beeooooop... Game Over

In the end, I wasn’t able to pass on the files to the boss while he left his position; I had to end the game with a high score of 528,000.

“Ah, my fingers hurt... What time is it?”

I glanced over at the clock on the wall while I massaged my numb fingers.

“2:30 A.M? I was playing this freaking game for an hour and a half?”

A great game was like a time machine. The feeling that you get when you you’re focused on a game; I gave a bitter smile to the Game & Watch with a startled feeling.

As I looked at the screen, the rankings showed up. My score of 528,000 took the spot of 3rd place. The 2nd place had 800,000; the 1st place had 900,000. How could I even get 1st place on this~

I pressed the confirmation button and passed the current screen. A new status window appeared in the top screen.

[Your score is being converted to your salary. The money that you earned from this game is 5,282,000 Yen~]

“What? Salary...? Ah~ right, this was called The Employee’s Game. The score that you earn gets displayed as your salary. Interesting~”

There was a “Cumulative Salary” count below the score so it seemed like my score gets added onto my “Salary” every time I played.

“I earned 50 million Won in an hour and a half. Haha~”

Although I invested an hour and a half of sleep time to this game, my mood wasn’t bad. I closed the Game & Watch and went to sleep, satisfied that I became rich in the game. The events that occurred in the arcade store still worried me; however, after being focused on the game for so long, I felt mentally drained and fell asleep quickly.

&

“I’m team leader, Kang Junhyuk, who will be working with you all from now on.”

A greeting to my new department. Customer Support was in a completely different department than the Game Development department, so the employees were somewhat familiar with each other but never had the chance to get close.

I was stuck almost all the time in the Game Development office, so it was a given that I would feel awkward with employees from other departments.

“Don’t worry about me and just do what you were doing. I need some time to adjust too. Haha...”

After I said that, I heard the murmurings of the employees from the small office. I think I heard the word ‘relegated’ being whispered.

Relegated... that was the right term to describe me. From team leader of the Game Development team to an office manager of the Customer Service department; it was no different than a knight becoming a foot soldier.

“8 Americanos please.”

After ordering, I leaned on a chair and looked out the window while waiting for the coffees.

8 cups of coffee costed 36,000 Won (\$36). This was more than most of my meals, how much money did I have to spend this month, again?

Even though I lived alone, my situation was such that the money left as soon as it came in in order to pay off my loans, so paying 36,000 Won felt expensive. I might have to starve myself at lunch



for a few days just to buy coffee for my new employees.

A little later, I wanted to make sure there were no errors with the payment process and checked my bank account balance through my smartphone. What I saw next made me gasp and swallow a mouthful of air.

“Wh-What is this?”

A balance of 53,000,000 Won? There was no way I would have a balance of over 50 million Won in my bank account! What is this, a new type of scam? I quickly took a look at the transfer history. 2:30 A.M. 52,820,000 Wons transferred from Game & Watch.

(TL: 53,000,000 Won is \$53k. Just take off 3 zero's at the end of Korean Won to convert it to dollars for future reference)

I blankly stared at the smartphone screen before rubbing my eyes. The money that came into my account was exactly the same amount as my game score. The only difference was that the Yen in the game was converted to Wons.

“Excuse me~!! Customer. Here are the coffees that you ordered~!!”

The voice of the cashier startled me as I looked toward the counter. As if they had called me several times, there was a hint of annoyance on the cashier's face.

“Ah, sorry. I was thinking about something else...”

I quickly picked up the coffees and left the coffee shop. However, my thumping heart had yet to calm down, so I sat on a bench to rest.

Calm down... Kang Junhyuk. Something amazing is happening to me, but I have to keep my composure.

A while later, I barely managed to calm myself down and went into the Customer Service department, holding the Coffees.

“Hey guys, coffee’s on me, come get some.”

“Ah, okay... Thank you.”

After passing out the coffees by hand to my future co-workers, it felt as if the awkward atmosphere was slightly lifted.

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Lunch time.

I took out the Game & Watch from my backpack while the department employees all left for lunch; I sat alone in the office.

‘So this “Employee’s Game” apparently pays you in real life, huh?’

-Thwack

I opened the lid to the Game & Watch to try this out again.

-Beep Beep Beep

The quiet office rung with the melodious game music, and I started to focus on the game so much that I forgot my hunger. How many minutes have flown by like that?

“Hmm? Team leader, you haven’t had lunch yet?”

I was startled by the employee’s voice and lost the game tempo, so I had to give up on the game.

-Pi-Bee-Beep

GAME OVER. I achieved a score of 37 million after playing for about an hour.

“Ah, Mr. Narae. You came back already? You could have taken more time with your lunch break.”

“I’m fine. I just had to check something really quick...”

I clicked the confirmation button on the Game & Watch and

showed an awkward smile. I diverted my eyes to the screen and saw my score, that was in the top 5 leaderboard, being added to my salary in the game. Now~ should I confirm it?

I took out my smartphone and pressed the banking app.

37,453,000 Won transferred by Game & Watch. Sure enough, it was real. A smile crept up to my face without me realizing. How could I resist smiling when I've earned 37 million Won in just one hour?

In less than a day, money close to a billion won came rolling in to my account.

(TL: Refresher, a billion won = \$100k)

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Before leaving work that day, I walked to the CEO's office while holding a white envelope.

"Come in."

-Creeaaakkk

As I opened the door and walked in, the CEO, who was picking his nose sitting on a leather chair in a tiny office, stared at me.

"Team leader Kang? What's the problem?"

“Sir, I’m quitting this company.”

“What?”

“The Customer Service department doesn’t suit me after all. There’s no need to replace me anyways because I got transferred yesterday, right? So please give me the resignation letter right away.”

“Hey, Mr. Kang. Are you making a demonstration right now because you’re dissatisfied with your situation?”

“No, I would have quit yesterday if that was the case. I thought about it carefully for a day; I made the decision because I saw no future for me in this company, anymore.”

“What did you say? Hah~ this really is.”

“This was the company that I’ve worked 15 years for. I wasn’t a big figurehead, but I managed to climb up to my position with my hard work. However, now I can’t stand this any longer.”

“Alright, alright, Mr. Kang. What do you want? Do you want me to move you back to the Game Development department?”

“No. I just want to leave.”

“This gentlemen. You’ve made up your mind about this?”

“Yes, I want to quit.”

“Where are you planning to work after you leave? You see, nobody will welcome you and your games in this field anymore.”

(TL: Typically it’s hard to find another job in Korean once you get fired from a company when you’re old.)

“I know that.”

“A person who knows this very well is acting like this?”

“I want to make a game of my own.”

“What?”

That was the last conversation with the CEO of the company, whom I’ve dedicated the last 15 years of my life to.

\*\*\*

“Now~ should I start?”

5 days after quitting my company. I showered with hot water and made my body and mind as relaxed as possible.

I can do this, I can do this.

For a single instant, I took a moment to gather my mind and flex my fingers. They moved gracefully as if they were tapping piano tiles.

Good~ Let's start.

-Thwack

With a resolute mind, I adjusted my posture and picked up the Game & Watch. I was aiming to beat the No. 1 score in the leaderboard today. My personality was to finish everything I've started; I've been playing this game non-stop for the past 5 days.

The outcome being, my current balance in the bank was close to 200 billion Won. I managed to get the No. 2 spot last night, but unfortunately, I was 300 points away from 1st place. Due to that, I howled in frustration for quite some time last night.

It was enough to make my downstairs neighbor ring my doorbell. You can feel the mental torture I had to go through, right?

-Phew... I can do this.

With a long sigh, after I pressed the start button to the game that I've played for the last 5 days, the "Employee's Game" started.

## Chapter 4 : A Run-Down Game Store (4)

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I started off light.

-Beep. Beep. BeepBeep.

However, as time went on, my fingers moved as if they were dancing. The score of 500,500 was already easily surpassed, but the problem was from 800,000 onwards. At this point, the boss and the damned clients were rapidly moving about as if they were intentionally evading the main character. However, I can't give up here.

I'm now at 850,000. I just had to get 50,000 more points to break into first place!!

-BeepBeeeeBeep. BeepBeepBeep. BeepBeep. BeepBeeeeBeep. BeepBeepBeep.

Have I ever focused on a game as much as now in my life? I was dying with curiosity to know what would happen if I got 1st place on this out-of-the-world game that gave you money in real life. Next to the 1st place ranking on the leaderboard was a picture of a crown, but the seemingly trivial crown had me going crazy with the desire to obtain it.

No way. Absolutely not. Let's not think of inconsequential thoughts. From this point on, a small mistake will be Game Over for me. I must move him like a machine and earn points!!



-BeepBeep. BEEP! BEEPBEEPBEEP!!

Current score 890,000. Great!! Almost there!!

I focused my whole attention on the game like crazy while forgetting to even blink. It's been a long while since I lost all feeling in my fingers, but I can't give up here. If I stop, I will have to start from the beginning!!

-BEEP! BeepBeepBeep!!

This son of a bitch boss!! Where the hell are you!!!

-BeepBeeeeeepBeep!!

This psycho of a buyer, you're not arriving on time!!  
ARGHHHH!!

-Du Dududu~

I cleared it... Yes I did it.

A score of 902,000... Yes, I'm in first place!! But, I can't be satisfied here. I'll take this all the way and get the maximum score of 999,999!!

After I overtook first place, my fingers didn't stop. I'm now at the point where I forget to breathe. I didn't even know if I'm hitting the right buttons. At that moment, when every digit place showed a 9...

-Pipipipipipipipi...

## GAME CLEAR

“Hm? It's saying cleared?”

There was such a thing as clearing a game on a Game & Watch? Whatever~

“Phew~~~”

I pressed my body onto the sofa and let out a long sigh.

“I cleared it. It's over...”

-Piipipipipipi~!!

I heard the playful sound effects of the Game & Watch and took a glance at the screen to see that fireworks were being fired in the black and white display. Haha. Looking at it like this really made it feel as if the game was over; however, if the game is cleared, does that mean the salary isn't coming in anymore? Now that I think

about it, I haven't thought about this at all!?

“Uh... 200 billion Wons are enough to last me a lifetime and have plenty left over...”

Adding 100,000 more to that would make no difference. Anyways, the satisfaction from clearing this game is enough. As I looked at the display screen with a content smile, suddenly something weird happened.

“Color...?”

That was right. The black and white LCD display that indicated the stop animation technology was completely switched to a color display.

“What is this? Is there something more left?”

Suddenly, a box of text appeared on top of the pure white screen.

[Please choose a year that you want to travel to]

The words of the arcade shop owner came into my mind as I saw the words.

“Young man... if you could go back in time, what period would you like to be in?”

Could the meaning of that conversation possibly be referring to this?

I quickly changed the blinking year text that was displayed on the screen. The very first year was 1983. That was when the fall of Atari began to start. It was ironic that in the year 83, the downfall of Atari, that was the leading figure of the era, marked the birth of a new hope in Japan at the same time; Mintendo invented a new family in the gaming world.

The intriguing thing was, every time I moved the dates around, the display introduced various important figures in the gaming world corresponding to the dates. There was a developer there that was still enthusiastically making games today, and there were also various figures who passed away.

From the list, I searched for Niseko Gunpei, the inventor of the Game & Watch in my hands. At that moment, as I unconsciously thought of how the Mintendo 3GS worked and touched the bottom screen, a screen filled with basic information about him came up.

“To think that it has touch recognition. The device itself turned into the latest model altogether?”

While I was using my fingers to scroll through the information page on the bottom, I discovered something interesting. That was the agenda of him in 1983. His every schedule was closely recorded along with the time in every city he went to, so if I were to go to this era this information would work as a navigator.

“If I were to use this correctly, then would I be able to meet some incredible figures?”

In actuality, if I could go back in time, then going to the Super-Family era – where the game industry was a little more secure – would have been good; however, wanting to experience the renaissance of gaming, I pressed the confirmation button to 1983 just like I told the old man.

[What country would you like to go to? Please speak into the microphone in the bottom of the screen]

“A mic?”

I followed the instructions of the text and closely examined the bottom of the device, and I saw the small hole. Today’s gamers might not know this, but once upon a time, there was a period where mics were on the family controllers.

Although there were almost no games that utilized the mic from the family controller, I distinctly remembered that there was such a function.

After a moment, I put my mouth on the mic of the Game & Watch and tried huff blowing on it.

[I could not recognize what you were saying.]

It was as if I was seeing the voice system in a smartphone. I

smirked and answered, “Japan.”

[What city in Japan would you like to be in?]

A city... The headquarters of Mintendo was located in Kyoto, but I couldn't just brazenly charge into the headquarters even if I were to go to this period, could I? I had to think of some way to connect myself to them...

(TL: Not Tokyo, there is an actual city called Kyoto. City names don't have to be scrambled xD)

(E: Here we go, the Korean-Japanese cross-over, rofl)

Then there was only one option. Let's meet with the future executive of Mintendo by “Accident”. After taking my thinking that far, I freely answered the Game & Watch's question.

“Tokyo.”

[You set the settings to Tokyo, Japan 1983. What is your age in that time period?]

In the 1980s, Mintendo's influence on the game industry was undisputably the highest, but, as the 90s passed by, they had to face fierce competition with Sensony's Gear Station device. To wade through this problem, it would be best if I was younger? However, setting the age to be too young could possibly grab me by the ankles.

“21 years old, just discharged from the military.”

[Your age is set to 21 years, Japanese age. Do you agree?"]

“Yeah.”

(TL: The MC used a ruder way of saying yes (not offensive) instead of the polite way.)

[What is your occupation?]

No matter how big of a storm I stir up, due of Atari Shock, there wouldn't be anyone to support me. First of all, let's use Mintendo to network.

“A Korean, job hunting, student.”

[Please choose 2 foreign languages to learn.]

“English, Japanese.”

I wouldn't have any problems living in Japan with this, right?

[Your profile is complete. Now, you will be living in 1983 as a Korean student living in Tokyo with all your current knowledge. Do you agree with the above? If you have any questions, you can ask them through the mic]

What? Wait, what should I do? Am I really traveling to the year 1983?

I was in a dilemma between the blinking YES and NO signs. At least I was not married, so there was no family to take care of; however, I thought of my parents living out in the countryside, and it was difficult to easily press the YES button.

“If I were to go to 1983, what would happen to the current me?”

[The current time would be frozen until you come back from the past. You will be faced with a choice, then.]

“A choice? What would I have to choose between?”

[You would have to choose between living the life of you that came back from the time travel to the past and the current you.]

‘Indeed, if I lived as a 23 year old in 1983 and came to the current time of 2015, my age would be 55 by the time I got back; I would be extremely old!!’

I felt a sense of dizziness and rested my temple onto my hands. What should I do? After contemplating for awhile, with the Game & Watch in front of me, I picked up my cell phone and dialed my mother. A brief ringing tone was followed by the warm voice of my mother.

“Junhyuk, is this you?”



“Yes, mother...”

Hearing my mother call my name with such a welcoming reaction choked me.

“You’re living well?”

“Of course~ I would be living very well if your father would stop his drinking habits.”

“Does father still drink a lot?”

“What’s the point of saying that, only my mouth would hurt.”

“He hasn’t changed.”

“But what’s the occasion? My son is calling me?”

“Actually, I quit the company last week.”

“What? Why? Was there a problem?”

“Hmm... I just wanted to try something new. I don’t know if it’s gonna go well, but I’m going to go on vacation for awhile.”

“A vacation is good. Yes, you’re 34 now, I believe you made a good decision.”

“Thank you. Mother. Ah~ If you check your account later there should be some money in there. I put in a lot this from my severance pay.”

“Really? You should have just kept it and use it for your vacation?”

“No it’s fine. Maybe because I’ve been working in the company for 15 years, they gave me quite a bit of severance pay so I think it would be enough.”

“Ok, thanks. We’re already grateful for the monthly allowance you send. Son~ Be careful on your trip and stop by home after you come back~ I’ll make something delicious...”

“Yes, mother...”

“It would be even better if you brought along a daughter-in-law when you come back~”

“Haha. I’ll try.”

“Alright... Have a safe trip my son...”

The warm voice of my mother that seemed to know everything

caused a strand of a tear to fall. If I talked anymore, she would find out about my unstable voice, so I told her to take care of herself and ended the call.

I calmed myself down for a moment and gathered my thoughts. I would decide on my choices after I came back from the time travels then. What would the difference be after I came back from the past to the current me? what would I accomplish before coming back...?

I used my smartphone to send my mother a corresponding amount to what a severance pay would be. If I sent her too much money, she would be worried instead so I send her an 'enough' amount and I finally put my hand near the confirmation button of the Game & Watch.

‘Yes!! Let’s try this out. Going to the hottest moment in gaming history... A period where cell phones didn’t exist, much less smartphones, but a shining moment nonetheless. I will take a somewhat long vacation to that period...’

“Mother, father. Take care of your health while I’m away.”

After those words, I clicked the confirmation button of the Game & Watch and my view turned blindingly white. After a while, everything in my living room turned into 2D pixels; this caused a sensation as if I were in a Retro game.

“Wow... this is miraculous?”

However, this view lasted for only a moment before the blocks of pixels came flying towards me like bricks. At first, I was able to avoid one or two through certain means, but after the count kept increasing, there was no space to dodge.

‘Wuh? Wuhhh?’

“EuuARRRRRRGGGGHH”

# Chapter 5 : Toy Company (1)

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While I was intimidated by the pixel bricks flying towards me; I crouched my body down until I resembled a tight ball. A few moments later, I heard an all too familiar sound.

-Ding ding ding ding

[...expected to arrive soon. A train headed to Ueno is expected to arrive soon]

“Ah?”

When I looked around at my surroundings, I was standing in a subway station. People around me were giving me strange glances because of my shout that came out of nowhere.

“Haha... Did I really just come like this? To the year 1983...?”

The train, coming in from quite a distance away, felt as if it were the mirror images of those shabby trains from old Korean movies. The train, that was designed without any style and was made solely for the purpose of transportation, stopped in front of me and opened its doors.

Although there was previously a moment of awkwardness earlier, the Japanese people in my surroundings quickly ignored me and started boarding the train. Their clothes and hairstyles emanated a bumpkin-like feeling and were vastly different from

the 2015 year style, so it was quite difficult to jolt myself back into reality; however, I hurriedly boarded the train along with them.

Narita International Airport... There was a Narita International Airport even in 1983. As I looked around the place in wonder, the stares of the Japanese people that looked at me suspiciously from before grew even more suspicious.

“Hmm... Hmm...”

I should try not to stand out too much. I sat down in an empty seat as nonchalantly as I could. Now that I have sat down, I noticed that I was wearing a backpack. I opened the zippers to the backpack that was on my back, in hope that I could find something useful.

There was a stamped Japanese passport along with a JBC Tokyo bank book. Yes, money is important. I opened the bank book to verify how much wealth I have. After seeing the signified amount, I flashed a bright grin. The entire 20 billion that I had from 2015 was seamlessly transferred to this period.

“I’m loaded from the start? I could start a company with this much.”

However, I quickly changed my train of thought. It was because rashly setting up a company in this time period could be catastrophic. First, I must stack up some experience; enough so no one would be able to question me in the future...

I put my passport and the bank book back into my backpack and looked further inside. As I felt around, I grabbed onto a heavy-feeling plastic device. That was exactly the Game & Watch that traveled through time with me.

“At least I feel reassured with you.”

I slipped a slight smile and took the Game & Watch out of my backpack. At that moment, the gazes of people who were focused on me was turned to the little device in my hands and diverted their attention away from me. In reality, there were several people inside the train holding similar devices like me.

They were playing the newly released game from 1980 called the Game & Watch BALL. BALL was also a game that had an extremely self explanatory game play that simply used the left and right hands to move a designated ball across the screen. However, for the people who were living in this period, this was already an incredible game.

Of course the Employee's Game that I carried utilized a much more sophisticated system, but on the outside, it didn't seem that their Game & Watch was much different than mine; thus, they quickly lost interest in me.

(TL: So each Game & Watch device can only play one game that came with it -\_-)

-Click

First, I had to check the exact year I was in, so I opened up the

Game & Watch. Like the name of the device implied, it obviously had a watch function.

-June 15th, 1983-

It was exactly one month before the Family became released in Japan... This was the perfect opportunity. The bumpy train came out of the dark tunnel and rushed with vigor into the sunshine-filled outdoors. A smile was unknowingly drawn on my face as I looked outside the window at the scenery. After living in 2015, seeing this classic scenery doesn't feel bad at all...

Now that I think about it, it's 1983 right now, and I was born in 82. This should have been the year after my birth, but to think that I'm 23 years old... I felt like I was slightly getting the shorter end of the stick here; I'm 11 years younger than I was yesterday, so I decided to ignore this fact and meet my new life in a foreign environment. Let's live life more enjoyably this time~!!

&

After that, for a month, I lived in Japan like a visiting tourist. Tokyo's scenery was a lot more similar to Seoul in the 1990s. Of course, it was said that at that time, their technology was 10 years faster than ours so having a similar feeling might have been a matter of fact...

“Hm~ I admit that I'm a little bored without a smartphone...”



Ah, now that I think about it, the current Japan is not in the [Heisei period](#) but it's still in the [Showa period](#)... Now that I've realized this fact, I'm getting a vastly different sensation? I arrived at the Akihabara Station with an ice cream in my mouth that was sold on the streets.

Maybe, because the Otaku Culture had yet to develop, there were no Maid Cafes or Cosplay in the Electronic market, so I felt a strange sense of heterogeneity. I had once visited Akihabara in 2013 and everywhere I went, there were game posters and animation characters drawn all over buildings. And for every several steps, it was a place packed with stores that sold games or mangas. However, the current Akihabara had stores that sold PC related items (Personal Computers at that), "small radios" (that were the size of a human head), and a fist sized Walkman device where you could run a tape through.

"Has the Family release event not started yet? I remembered that it was today for sure?"

(TL: The Family is a gaming console like a reeealllly old version of an xbox)

I wandered around the jam-packed weekend Akihabara and looked around. The game industry had yet to mature, so I couldn't find a professional game stores like the 2000s. Should I just start a game store? I don't think that's a bad idea?

No? What would the game store senior think of me if I travelled through time and came all this way just to sell rip offs of Mintendo?

I thought about it and wondered if that senior was an existence like 'God'? To revive the rotting game industry... Wouldn't I, who knew the future trends, have the possibility to be able make more amazing games for the future players than the me of 2015?

What should I do now to accomplish that? First, I opened the Game & Watch to obtain information for Family release event.

-Mintendo's Family. Release date: July 15th, 1983...-

I flipped through the pages with my fingers and ate the ice cream when an unknown music beat rang out from somewhere.

"What? Just now...?"

-Pew... Pew...

I found it!! I threw the ice cream into the trash can and quickly hastened my footsteps. The direction where the sound was coming from was where the future second-hand electronics retailer 'SoftMap' would place itself. Small shops filled the streets now, but in the late 90s, buildings would take the place of the shops.

This is how I met the incredible gaming console that would give the other gaming consoles a run for their money after Atari in 1980. However, if there was one fault to find it, it was the fact that the incredible console was first sold through street vendors.

"Come in~ Come in~"

I could clearly see that the sellers, who were enthusiastically promoting their products, were Mintendo headquarters employees and not professional retailers. However, in contrast to their enthusiasm, the reaction of the public was incredibly lackluster. I thought Mintendo, who released the Game & Watch would, at least get some sort of reaction from the public, but this is completely opposite to my expectations...

This was how much of an impact the Atari Shock had on the gaming industry? Of course, when Atari released the open source tool so anyone could make games, everyone welcomed it. However, that was only for a brief moment as incomplete games were the only ones that flooded the market, and this was a major turn-off for players. However, to think that the aftermath would cross the pacific to reach Japan this quickly...

“Welcome~ This is the 8 beat gaming device that we invented here at Mintendo. Everyone try it out and enjoy it~”

I approached one of the employees who was soliciting customers and asked with a smile. Of course, there was a tacky red and white colored Family model placed in front of me.

“Are they selling well?”

“What? Ah, welcome customer. Would you like to first try it out? This is the latest 8 beat gaming console that we invented at Mintendo.”

Why is the term 8 beat so hilarious to me? I received the controller that the employee handed to me. Wow...The cord was way too short!!

The gaming consoles of 2015 had the wireless bluetooth feature so there were no problems enjoying the game from a far-away sofa, but the first ever Family console had fixed 1P and a 2P controllers. In the end, you could only play the game close to the TV.

I have no idea which idiot configured the controls like this.

Although they would never have expected this monster of a machine to sell for almost 70 million worldwide. It was simply that when the Game & Watch began to sell; they hopped on the bandwagon and created this product for the sole purpose of generating profit, so even Nintendo did not have high hopes for this device from the beginning.

The Family launched with a total of three games; this included Popeye and two series of Donkey Kong. Even in this period, many companies, like NEGA or CAMCO that made games, existed. However, they were focused on creating games for gaming arcades, so they weren't paying attention to making games for the first ever Family console.

“How many units have been sold so far?”

“Ah. That's, we haven't sold even 1 model yet...”

‘Huh~ It’s nearing 1 pm and they’re saying they haven’t sold a single model yet?’

“How much is this?”

“Yes. It’s 14,800 Yen.”

That was expensive. 14,800 Yen, in 1983... it was pretty ridiculous to buy a brand new model for that much; especially one that hasn’t been verified yet.

First, I sat down in front of the Television that displayed an outdoor beach on the screen. As I sat down, the people that were passing by took hidden glances at me.

“Can you turn on Donkey Kom for me?”

“Yes, I will.”

The employee put the Donkey Kom cartridge into the cartridge spot and turned on the power button.

-Pupupupu~ Pupu~ Piko Piko

On the bottom of the screen, an Italian Marigi wearing a red hat was climbing up a hill with a metal bat. The game play was that you had to dodge or break the logs that KingKong threw at you and arrive at the top to defeat KingKong.

I flashed a smile and maneuvered Marigi left and right and tried jumping. Every time I passed a log, the people that crowded around me cheered.

“Woaahh...”

-Pew Pew. Piong~ Piong~

The jumping sound effects put a bright smile on my face.

“Wooaahhh~!!”

As I cleared the first stage of the game without a hitch, the employee tilted his head and asked me.

“Your skills are extremely good?”

“I played a lot at arcades, so I must have adjusted easily. I would like to purchase a Family unit along with Popeye and Donkey Kom.”

“Our Mintendo Family’s first customer. Thank you very much~!!”

To think that I’m the first customer of this legendary console... My mood is extremely unusual. Soon after, an employee came over with a camera and asked me.

“Is it okay if we take a picture of you?”

A historical commemoration photo~ Not bad? At that moment, I heard the voice of a little kid.

“Mommy~!! Buy me that too~!!”

“No way. Takashi, you promised mommy you would only look around?”

“But... I can do better than that guy~!!”

Huh? This little kid sure is spirited. I flashed an amused grin and ask the kid.

“Little kid, what’s your name?”

## Chapter 6 : Toy Company (2)

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“My name is Tokiyushi Takashi.”

Tokiyushi Takashi...

I think I've heard of this name before? I briefly glanced at the Game & Watch that was hidden inside my backpack and looked up the information about Tokiyushi.

Ah!! That's right. So this lass over here would become the first ever pro-gamer who would be the renowned 'Master Takashi'?

A super player who would speed clear the game called 'Wonder Boy' that would be released in 1994. I curiously stared at the boy and asked him.

“Do you like games?”

“Yes!! I l totally love them.”

“Yeah? Then I'll give you a gift. Add another one for the kid too, please.”

“You don't have to do that for us...”

“It's fine, I'm doing it because I want to. There's no problem so please accept it.”



I took the game console that the Mintendo employee brought over and gave it to Takashi while ruffling his hair.

“Have fun with it.”

“Thanks hyung. I’m really, really thankful~!!”

(TL: Hyung can be another word for older brother or a guy who is older than you who you feel familiarity towards.)

“Excuse me, but your picture?”

“Please take the first purchase commemoration picture with the kid. You guys at Mintendo will be more thankful to this kid in the future.”

“What? I don’t know what you mean by that...”

“Just know that something will happen.”

I spent the rest of that day buying more things from the Mintendo shop and returned to the hotel that I was staying at. The next day, I received the daily morning papers from the hotel and, in a small picture, saw the smiling kid posing with the Family console box.

&

A few days after the Family launch event.

I was preparing myself to board the train to Tokyo. In my stuffed bag, there were several models of the Game & Watch devices.

(TL: Remember every Game & Watch device can only play the pre-installed game that came with it so you would need multiple devices to play multiple games.)

“I still have about 30 minutes left...”

-Grrrummmble...

I was hungry after missing my breakfast to catch the train. In 2015, missing my breakfast was commonplace because I had to leave for work. However, I wonder, did it become a habit after not missing my breakfasts at the hotel? Others might think that living in a hotel for a month was wasteful, but this was 1983. Prices were incredibly deflated, and even the 4 star hotel that I was currently staying in was cheaper than the price of any one-night motels from 2015.

“Now, I would have to slowly start finding a house in Kyoto, but leaving the hotel is a little...”

I was currently roaming the Tokyo subway substation with a light-hearted mind knowing that I already reserved a hotel in Kyoto. At that moment, a delicious smell wafted over to my nose. As I turned my head, I saw rows of food stands selling packed lunches in a street corner.

‘Now that I think about it, I’m able to eat inside the train. Great~ I should buy one of those packed lunches while I still have some time left.’

After I finished thinking, I slowly started moving my feet toward the food stands. The passersby were all exuding a vibrant energy due to the currently booming economy. Their pride of being the 2nd most developed country in the world could be felt but for me, I felt that their country was a pitiful victim of war.

The feeling grew stronger when I tuned into the news. I was disgusted every time I turned on the TV, and it showed Japan essentially begging the world for pity after the Hiroshima bombing during World War 2. Then there was the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima as well... Now that I think about it, Japan really does have a deep relationship with nuclear radiation. It’s about time that they become best buds.

“Welcome~ What type of packed lunch does customer want?”

“What is the most popular item here?”

“The shrimp and the chicken lunches are the most popular here~”

Shrimp and Chicken. The holy duo’s popularity was the same in the 1980s.

I shoved a 300 Yen coin to the nice-looking lady and ordered the chicken meal. As I finished ordering, a man behind me spoke to the lady.

“Give me a chicken lunch too please.”

“Ah, dear customer, we’re sorry but that last customer bought the last one so we’ll quickly make another one for you.”

“Ah, how long would that take?”

“It would take about 10~ minutes, is that okay?”

The man made a perplexed expression while tapping his watch. Huh? This person...

“Ah, then I would be tight for the train’s arrival...”

Is the chicken lunch of this stand that famous? But aside from that, I was more interested in the young man in front of me.

I knew I would encounter him once I boarded the train, but to meet him outside... This was an unexpected surprise?

“If it’s okay, I’ll give mine to you.”

“What? No~ No thank you. You don’t have to do that.”

“It’s fine. Actually, I was deeply contemplating between shrimp and chicken. Excuse me, can you give my order to this person and give me the shrimp.”

“Ah, thank you for conceding. Dear customer~ our shrimp meal is really delicious too. I’ll add one more shrimp as a bonus for you~”

“Thank you~”

In the end, it was a WIN-WIN situation, and we paid the bill for the lunch.

“Ah, thank you for the favor.”

The man slightly bowed to me and quickly ran to the top. I realized that I didn’t have much time either? I should hasten my pace too!! And a short while after, I arrived at the train boarding platform.

“A-17, A-17. It’s here.”

After I confirmed my boarding ticket, I calmed my slightly quivering heart and stepped onto the train. The business seat had a clean interior that I could comfortably sleep in for 3 and a half hours on the way to Kyoto. As I walked towards my seat, I saw that, in the window seat, a familiar man was seated.

“Excuse me, I’ll be sitting here.”

“Ah, go ahead-Hmm?”

“Ah, hello. We found each other again.”

“This is an interesting coincidence.”

“Here, take a seat.”

The man that was offering me the seat was Mr. Niseko Gunpei... The father of the portable gaming device, Game & Watch, and also the figurehead that led the portable devices of Nintendo up until 2015; he also made the Game Boy. I gave a small greeting of thanks and sat down on the seat next to him.

This was actually a plan made by me using the Game & Watch that I brought from the future to locate Mr. Gunpei and reserved the seat next to him. The meeting at the food stand was really a coincidence, but my first meeting with him wasn’t bad at all.

“I was really thankful back at the food stand.”

He really was a Japanese for saying thanks multiple times after one favor. A while later, the train started rolling and we were happily eating lunch together. I almost got a coughing fit from how we nodded and greeted each other every time we made eye contact while we were eating. After finishing the green tea that I brought from a vending machine, I had nothing else in particular

to do so I decided to slowly initiate my plan.

That was by taking out the Game & Watch in my backpack. The first game that I took out was the model with BALL installed.

As I did that, Mr. Gunpei cheerfully looked at the gaming device in my hands like the creator himself of the Game & Watch would.

He would be pleased because the whole country was loving his device, which was like a child to him.

-Pew. Pew.

The beat music reverberated in the compartment as the tiny ball moved around the screen.

“I’m sorry, it’s loud for you, right?”

I swiftly turned down the volume key and apologized to Mr. Gunpei.

“There’s no problem. I’m fine. You can continue.”

Maybe because I was playing the device that he invented, Mr. Gunpei looked at me with a pleasant smile.

However, I started pouring criticism to his Game & Watch on

purpose.

“Since they already made this device portable, it would have been good if they at least installed a headphone jack... don’t you think so?”

“What? Ah, you’re right. If you wanted to enjoy it in a public place, it seems like you would need a headphone jack.”

“Right? No matter how the game is played on the screen, sound is an important experience as well.”

Mr. Gunpei nodded to my complaints and subsequently took out a small handbook and starting scribbling things down.

“Excuse me, did you have any other problems from using the device?”

“There are a lot.”

“Th-That many?”

Mr. Gunpei, who was staring at me, suddenly wrinkled.

“The device itself is inefficient, incompetent even.”

“Excuse me?”



Mr. Gunpei's face suddenly wrinkled.

"I said that this device itself is incompetent."

"What?"

"I like games from Nintendo. I purchased every single model of Game & Watch that ever came out and a while ago, I went to Akihabara and bought the Family console on its opening release day."

"Really? Thank you very much."

"Hmm? Why are you saying thank you?"

"Ah? It, it's nothing. I misspoke, please keep talking."

Mr. Gunpei gazed at me with incredibly infatuated eyes. I took the 3 models of Game & Watch out of my backpack; of course, the Game & Watch that I brought from 2015 wasn't included.

"You really have it all."

"Yes, but even the latest released GUNMAN model doesn't have an earphone jack. As important it is as the main character being a cowboy, I think the sound effect of gun fire is equally as important; have you ever played this without the sound?"

“N-No...”

“Try playing it.”

Mr. Gunpei received the GUNMAN from me and played it without the sound. And after a while, he handed the device back to me and nodded.

“This is clearly less immersive without the sound unlike BALL.”

“Right? What were they smoking when they made this...”

As I enthusiastically made fun of his device that he regarded as his child, Mr. Gunpei’s face started to harden a bit. However, I didn’t stop there.

“And on top of that, the most fatal issue is that each device can only play one game.”

“Ah...?”

“The cartridge system was invented in the 70s with Atari so it’s a fairly old technology, but the Game & Watch series has been released for over 3 years and they still haven’t utilized the cartridge system. I see this as nothing more than a manipulative plot to raise the sales.”

“Ma... Manipulative plot? However, it’s impossible to display a surplus of movements on the Stop Animation Technology so...”

“That right there is the last problem. That’s why every game feels similar. Stop Animation games emphasize fast learning on the player’s part. That’s why this game has no end. It’s just over when the player dies. Simply put, it’s good for dying but the immersive quality gets a zero.”

“So you’re saying it’s not fun...?”

Mr. Gunpei’s skin tone was already pale white. Hoho... did I whip him too much? Then should I slowly start giving him the carrot? Mr. Gunpei was wiping cold sweat off of his face with a handkerchief and tried to forcefully smile back at me.

He, who was born in 1941, started working at Mintendo in 1965 and invented a plethora of finished products.

Mintendo first started making the popular Korean playing cards; even the company ‘Trump Cards’ was the first one to import the cards from them, so they were popular as a card company.

Mr. Gunpei, who was a new recruit back then, was inspecting the machine that cut the cards, but the work was too simple so in his free time, he used the parts of others and made toys that were a hot item in souvenir toy stores to this day.

A steel handle toy that was in the shape of a zig-zag stretched

when you grabbed the handle part, could easily be found in little toy stores. The person that invented it was exactly this man right here. And I was ~30 years old when I found that out.

The Game & Watch that he made was not exactly a game, but a toy that had a screen attached to it for kids. It was thought that rather than the immersion quality or the specs of the game, it was made for little kids to enjoy, but the user base unexpectedly grew beyond its intended audience and now, it became the toy for the entire nation.

Due to the Game & Watch's success, he must have gotten endless amounts of commendation from his company, and everywhere he went, he must have seen people that were enjoying his device.

But now, when he met me, who roasted the device that he made to dust, he was wearing an embarrassed expression on his face. Then I should stop my teasing here and...

“However, if the few problems are dealt with, this could become an unbelievable item.”

## Chapter 7 : Toy Company (3)

---

“Really? What parts do you think need fixing?”

“First, you need to get rid of this Stop Animation technology from this LCD screen. Also, in order to enjoy a variety of games, you have to utilize a more flexible display that could handle movement, and you need to implement a cartridge system. For example...”

I took a notebook out of my backpack and started sketching with a pencil. It was exactly the design for the GamBoy that would be released by Mintendo in 1989. Mr. Gunpei’s mouth gaped wider and wider as he saw my sketch for the GamBoy.

“W-Wait... What’s this huge space behind the LCD display for?”

“It’s for the cartridges.”

“Ah, then this bottom part would have the power button and the speakers. The controllers are similar to the Family console released last week... Ah? Why are the buttons not flat and diagonal?”

“This is what I felt when I was playing the Game & Watch. I noticed that it would be easier to use a diagonal arrangement rather than a leveled one. I often had many experiences with pressing the wrong buttons.”

“So that was the case...”

“For the new model, after the Game & Watch, I think this shape would do well.”

“So it’s a ratio of 4:3 between the LCD display and the game cartridge... Do you think many games would come out for this? Mintendo isn’t that big of a company. Not all employees can be hung up on game development... If they made this device, wouldn’t they have to consistently produce new games for a few years, at the very least?”

“Mintendo would only have to produce a few iconic games like Donkey Kom. When this device gets as many sales as the Game & Watch, other companies would rush in to make the games.”

“Ah, so what you’re thinking is...”

“Of course, they should collect the royalties from these companies. They should take about half of the software sales...”

“Ah~!!”

Mr. Gunpei exclaimed in astonishment and slapped his knees. He could not close his mouth. He was analyzing my sketch while stealthily wiping cold sweat off of his face. It was expected because the idea from the sketch was no different from seeing the exact invention that he would invent in the future.

“It’s amazing...”

Getting half of the sales revenue from the companies that made games were not that much different from direct profit. Additionally, since no one was in the mobile game making industry, any price that the company called for would be the market price.

Preempting before the competition developed for the market was that important. From the 90s onwards, NEGA and Banzai started competing with mobile devices. Additionally, judging from today, the birth of the device that originally would have been released in 89 could come out faster?

As we were heading to Kyoto, we talked a lot about the new mobile console and grew pretty close. Mr. Gunpei was greatly shocked by the fact that I was Korean. He must have thought that I was Japanese because of my impeccable accent.

-Our next terminal is Shin Osaka. We will be arriving at the Shin Osaka station soon.

As the train was nearing the destination, Mr. Gunpei looked at me with a greatly reluctant expression and asked me.

“Kang-kun, if you’re staying at Kyoto, where would you be?”

“I don’t know. I plan to temporarily stay at a hotel and go sightseeing for a bit. There was nothing in particular to see at Tokyo; however, I heard there were a lot of eateries in Osaka, so I’m excited by the idea of visiting those eateries.”

“Really? The people in Osaka are friendly, and there are a lot of delicious things to eat for sure. By the way... When you find a hotel, can you give a call to this number?”

I received the business card that Mr. Gunpei handed to me and blankly stared at his face. Yes, there has to be a bit of pretending from me here as well. Mr. Gunpei was brightly grinning as he saw my reaction.

“Actually, I’m the the inventor of that Game & Watch, Niseko Gunpei. I’ve realized a lot of points while talking with you today. I want to absolutely meet with Kang-kun again. Our company is located in Kyoto so please contact me when you feel comfortable.”

“Ah, I couldn’t recognize Mr. Niseko himself; I don’t know if I made a grave mistake.”

“Not at all. In contrast, it was a big stroke of luck for me to meet Kang-kun. I ate the delicious chicken lunch too~ haha.”

“Then I will contact you in the near future.”

“I’ll wait for you.”

“Alright, then~”

We gave farewells to each other, and we walked away towards



our own destination. I escaped the hot afternoon sun that was shining down upon the Osaka station by riding a taxi and moved to the hotel that I've already sent my luggage to.

I've lived here for over a month, yet my bank account of 20 billion Yen haven't decreased at all. Just the interest from the deposit in the bank was like a stream of money that was keeping my account from ever drying up.

Ah~ I can't wait until credit cards are invented.

I'm tired as hell carrying this raw cash around.

&

-Wang~ Wang~ Wang~ Wang~

(TL: Cry of the cicada)

'Aish... so noisy. Let me sleep...'

-Wang~~ Wang Wang~ Wang~

These damned cicada bastards.

I, who was lying on my bed, subsequently woke up and kicked the blankets.

This was one summer in August 17th, 1983.

This season was truly the apex out of the temperatures of the year. Thankfully, the hotel that I was staying in was built not long ago so ACs were installed in every room.

I, who thoroughly enjoyed sightseeing the Nara, Kobe, and Kyoto districts, in the meantime, took out the business card of a certain person from my wallet and looked at it.

“I enjoyed everything that need to be enjoyed for the past month. Now, should I start off by giving a call?”

I held, in my hands, the business card that I received from Mr. Gunpei, and I turned the dials on the telephone. Along with the ‘Dudududu’ sound, the numbers that were written on the dial returned to its original position. After a bit of waiting, a polite voice of a woman picked up the phone.

“Thank you for calling, this is Mintendo’s mobile game development department.”

“Ah, excuse me. Is Mr. Niseko Gunpei available?”

“Yes Mr. Niseko is currently here, who should I say this is?”

“He’ll recognize me if you say a Korean student Kang Junhyuk is

on the line for him.”

“Okay, please wait for a moment...”

As I tapped the wooden table out of boredom, a satisfying noise rung in the room. And, after a while, I heard the fired up voice of Mr. Gunpei. His tone was full of excitement.

“Kang-kun!? Is that you? This guy, why are you calling now? Do you know how much I’ve waited for you?”

I mean, that was my decision. I would lack the weight if I called in the day after meeting.

“Have you been well? I contacted you a little late because I was sightseeing.”

“Where are you right now?”

“I’m currently staying at a Rikuten hotel near the Nihonbashi Osaka district.”

“That’s great. I was planning to travel to Osaka tomorrow for work anyways; can you meet me tomorrow?”

“Let’s do that. Where do you want to meet?”

“Can you tell me the contact information of your hotel? I’ll contact you before I arrive.”

“Yes, alright.”

&

Next morning, as I finished my breakfast and returned to my room, a call from the front desk was waiting for me. It was from Mr. Niseko Gunpei.

“Kang-kun, I plan to arrive in an hour. Is the time alright?”

“Yes, where do you want to meet?”

“You don’t have to worry about the place. I’m going to your hotel right now.”

“What!?”

“After I received the call from you yesterday, I couldn’t sleep at all. I was anticipating what would happen when two geniuses meet today.”

Two geniuses? Is someone coming with him? An hour later, I sat down in the hotel lobby and waited for Mr. Gunpei. Like the punctual people they were, a little later, two men came out of the taxi that stopped in front of the hotel. One was Mr. Gunpei, who I

was already familiar with, and following him, was a man that looked to be in his early 30s who came in to the hotel with Mr. Gunpei.

“Kang-kun~!!”

“Mr. Niseko~ Have you been well?”

“It’s a relief that you look healthy. So, did you have fun sightseeing in Osaka?”

“Yes, as expected there were more things to see than in Tokyo. Who is the person next to you?”

“Ah, that’s right. Yo, Kumamoto, say hello. This is the youth from the train that I’ve been telling you about.”

“How are you? My name is Kumamoto Shigeru.”

“Kumamoto Shigeru!?”

As I unconsciously yelled his name out, Mr. Kumamoto asked me with a puzzled expression.

“Do you perhaps know me?”

“Ah, I’m sorry. This is the first time seeing you, but aren’t you

the creator of Donkey Kom?”

“Yes, that’s right. So you enjoyed Donkey Kom? Thank you very much.”

I lightly shook the hand that Mr. Kumamoto offered. I didn’t know that I would meet the legendary world famous director this fast? I thought it would be hard to meet him until I at least got into Mintendo; however, to think that Mr. Gunpei would bring him here to meet me.

Kumamoto Shigeru; even a person who isn’t familiar with games would still know the plumber Super Marigee with the mustache. On top of that, works like Karin’s Legend, Animal town, Fox Star, etc... would all be born by this person in the future.

“I’m called Kang Junhyuk. Nice to meet you, Mr. Kumamoto.”

“Gunpei told me that I HAD to see you, so I followed him; I don’t know if we’re disturbing you by suddenly meeting like this, though.”

Mr. Kumamoto Shigeru was 62 year old in 2015, where I was living before, and he had a rather hardened image; however, meeting him in 1983, he was a fiery young man in his 20s.

“Now~let’s not talk here and move somewhere else. It’s a bit early, but how does dinner together sound?”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

We exited the hotel and went into another nearby hotel. After ordering a simple meal, I started a conversation with Mr. Kumamoto with a smile.

“I heard that Donkey Kom was incredibly popular in the american arcade market, congratulations.”

“I didn’t know that my game would be successful to that extent. The American Mintendo branch requested a Rom Board that they would use in their game centers. I had nothing to do at the time, so I made the game...”

That story, I knew it too.

In 1983, Mintendo was going to debouch in the american gaming industry, and they needed a new Rom file to be used in the game center. However, the ‘We should not invest man-power into something that may or may not make profit’ mentality led Kumamoto, in the game development department, to not have much work.

He majored in engineering, which was completely different from programming, and he was able to make a character and implement DOTs by himself. Thus, he developed the theme of a King Kong saving a damsel in distress with simple levels.

That game instantly caught on fire as soon as it entered the

american market, and it sparked a new hope in the arcade market that was beginning to decline. And, from that, the character Marigee, who was in the Donkey Kom game, developed into the Marigee brothers.

And the year 1985... When Super Marigee was introduced to the Family console, they moved on from the arcade industry and started focusing solely on consoles to play at home.

Mintendo started their business with the belief that 1 genius was better than 100 crooks, and that genius was the young man standing in front me.



## Chapter 8 : Toy Company (4)

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“By the way, when do you plan to develop a sequel to the Donkey Kom made in the 80s?”

“Actually, the sequel is almost completed, and we’re planning to release it any day now.”

“Really? Can I ask what type of a game it is?”

Perhaps because the copyright system for games have not been fully developed yet, Mr. Kumamoto freely explained the contents of the game.

“This time, I have decided to slightly switch the theme and make an entirely new game out of the character that saved the princess from Donkey Kom.”

He must have completed this game to show support for the Family console that was released a month ago.

Mr. Gunpei was observing our conversation with a proud smile.

Mr. Kumamoto’s Marigee Brothers was a 2 player game, like Donkey Kom, where you had to defeat the mushroom soldiers and the turtles in a stage. While I was talking to Mr. Kumamoto about the Marigee Brothers, I offered one suggestion.

“Mr. Kumamoto...”

“Yes? Do you have any questions about the Marigee Brothers?”

“Actually, rather than this completed game that’s about to be released, I have a question about the next project that would be made after Marigee.”

“You mean the sequel? We haven’t seen how the players will react to this game, so for us to start planning the next game is a little...”

The 1980s was a time where developing a sequel to a game would take a considerable amount of time. In 2015, sequels were being concurrently made alongside the original game, so I could understand Mr. Kumamoto’s hesitation.

“I think that currently, the character Marigee has an easily recognizable image, even surpassing Donkey Kom. From this, we can deduce that the Marigee Brothers will have a certain amount of popularity when it’s released. So, I was wondering if we could utilize a special method in the sequel to Marigee?”

“A special method?”

Kumamoto stared at me with a confused expression; Mr. Gunpei who was right next to him flashed a knowing smile of ‘So it has started’, and he adjusted his glasses.

&

Side Scrolling. This was the magical technique that would revolutionize the screen from its limited size. It was the most common of methods utilized in games of 2015, but this was the year 1983.

In this period, every game was restricted to an unchanging background. The start and end of every game had to be executed within the set background; popular games like Galug and Donkey Kom were no exception.

Just like how humanity first stepped on the moon, I was trying to make the footstep that would greatly revolutionize the gaming industry.

“We would scroll the background.”

“What? What are we doing?”

Mr. Kumamoto and Mr. Gunpei couldn't understand me at first. Of course, understanding the Side Scrolling method would be difficult at first. I took a notebook out of my backpack and laid it in front of Mr. Kumamoto, and I lifted a pen.

“Now, look here. This box represents the screen of the game. And standing inside here is Mr. Kumamoto's Marigee. And then...”

I extended the pen from the box outside and drew a long line.

“And this is the stage.”

“Ah!!”

At that moment, Mr. Kumamoto slapped his thigh and excitedly shouted. However, Mr. Gunpei still didn't know what was going on as he took turns looking at both of us.

“So that was the case!! That's right! The start and the end does not always have to be contained within a screen. The background could be a moving animation, just like a film roll, and it would give the game characters a sense of moving forward.”

He figured out ten when I only taught him one? I only gave him a hint, but Mr. Kumamoto was instantly able to figure out the concept of Side Scrolling.

“Gunpei, you were right. Mr. Kang Junhyuk is a genius! A genius!!”

“H-Hey Shigeru, I still have no clue about what's going on. What does it mean to have a stage that moves out of the screen? What I'm asking is, how would you show something out of the screen...?”

Kumamoto had to explain to Mr. Gunpei in simpler terms for him to understand, and, after a while, Mr. Gunpei who was nodding his head suddenly gaped and stared at me.

“How are you able to come up with ideas like this? You’re completely revamping the way how games have been thought of.”

“With this, the experience should feel more adventurous inside the game.”

Mr. Kumamoto murmured something under his breath like an incantation while he stared at my Side Scrolling method. Huh? What is he doing now? He closed his eyes as if he were imagining something. A while after, Mr. Kumamoto opened his eyes and had a smile drawn on his mouth.

“I thought of a simple concept for the next sequel.”

So fast? He could already thought of an idea for his next project? Mr. Kumamoto grabbed the pen that was lying on the table and rapidly sketched bricks, a box with a question mark, and a flag with a mushroom inscribed on it... These were the items that would act as the main sauce for the emerging Super Marigee game.

“Marigee will save the princess.”

“A princess?”

“Knights have been saving the princess up until now, but Marigee is a modern character. He who symbolizes modernness will save the Mushroom Kingdom’s princess from the monster.”

After listening to Kumamoto, Mr. Gunpei beamed and replied:

“Ho... This is an interesting idea as well. Continue on...”

“First of all, the character Marigee is a plumber. He works in a dark and a damp place. So the monster would be... Hmm... A cold and slimy reptilian creature would fit the image well. This monster would kidnap the Mushroom Kingdom princess, and Marigee, who coincidentally falls from the Mushroom Kingdom, would embark on a journey to save the princess and fight the enemy.”

What is this guy. He made an entire game in this short period of time? A genius is indeed a genius! I leaned on the chair and stared at Mr. Kumamoto while I crossed my arms.

The tips of my fingers were tingling from the fact that I was currently witnessing the birth of a project that would give the gaming world a huge impact. Mr. Gunpei let out a cheerful smile and asked Kumamoto.

“Then... That monster and the princess should have names too.”

Mr. Kumamoto turned the question to me and asked.

“Kang-kun, what food do you enjoy eating most, in Korea?”

“Me? I’m not sure...”

Until now, I've been eating greasy foods from Japan like fried steak and rice bowls; one food popped into my head. A sizzling meat soup inside of a warm pot... adding a bowl of rice on top of that and wrapping a piece of kimchi to put in my mouth~ Kyaa~~

“A GookBap”

(TL: Gook means soup, Bap means rice. Soup rice xD)

“Kookpat?”

“A GookBap.”

“Goop. Bak?”

It would be a bit hard for both of them to pronounce because of the unique Korean vowels... After trying several times to pronounce GookBap, Mr. Kumamoto flashed a grin and said.

“Kang-kun inspired this idea so let's call the reptilian monster ‘Koot Pah’.”

What!? You bastard, why are you deciding this so easily!? And why should the name of the food I like be the name of a villain that will be harassed by Marigee for the next 30 years to come!! Mr. Gunpei, who was next to me, gave a burst of laughter and nodded his head.

“Then what would be the name of the princess?”

At that moment, a waitress came to our table and put fruits on the table, and she said.

“These peaches are for desserts.”

Kumamoto was staring at the peaches and opened his mouth.

“We can call her the Princess Peach.”

So this was the birth of Princess Peach that will be fated to be kidnapped by the monster Koot Pah for the next 30 years. What the hell is this~?!!

&

Two weeks passed by, just like that, and I stood in front of the headquarters of Mintendo wearing a suit...

“Haha... I came here in the end. I played around for the last two months, so should I start working?”

I exhaled a long breath, and I slowly entered the headquarters building. Even though it was September, the heat waves were still around, so it was too hot to wear a suit; however, the interior of the building was cold enough to give me the chills. Maybe it was because there were no warnings against the dangers of catching a cold through the AC, it was blasted almost all the way to the



coldest temperature.

“It-It’s cold!!”

“What could I help you with?”

An employee in the lobby asked me, who had just came into the building.

“Ah, I came for an interview with Mr. Niseko and Mr. Kumamoto’s recommendation.”

“Oh? Then would you be Mr. Kang Junhyuk?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“I was worried because you were Korean; however, you speak Japanese really well.”

“Thank you. Where do I go from here?”

“Mmm, Mr. Kang Junhyuk is a special case, so you should be able to be interview at the president’s office.”

“What?”

So I was being interviewed directly at the president’s office

instead of a panel of judges? With the president of Mintendo, Mr. Yamauchi? I slightly tilted my head and asked the employee again.

“The president is interviewing me, himself?”

“Yes, our Mintendo’s president directly interviews every employee one by one, and he assigns them to the right department.”

Mintendo currently gave off an image of a toy company rather than the world-renowned gaming company that they would develop into. I followed the desk employee, and I knocked on the door of the president’s office on the highest floor.

“Come in.”

I swallowed my dry saliva and calmed my heart before the door opened. This was still an interview after all, so I was pretty nervous...

“You can go inside.”

The employee gestured his hands for me to go inside, so I slightly lowered my head and thanked him before going inside the office. The president stood up from his seat, allowed me a seat at the reception table, and asked me:

“Hmm... Are you the Kang Junhyuk from Korea?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Gunpei-kun and Shigeru-kun were praising you so much, they begged me to take you in.”

“I’m thankful that they view me in such a good light.”

“I’m actually reluctant about developing games, but, from what they said, the game industry will have a huge part in the children’s toy market.”

“I also agree with that.”

“Really? How did you come to that conclusion?”

Why is this guy asking so many questions the moment I step in? However, I already prepared for these questions, so I was able to answer right away.

“It wouldn’t get boring.”

“Wouldn’t get boring?”

“That’s because you can enjoy a variety of games with one device. Also, it’s plenty enjoyable playing by yourself.”

“A device that can host a variety of games... interesting. However, wouldn't a toy have to be easy to get bored of so new products would sell?”

“A device is not a toy.”

“What?”

“Adults don't play with toys. From what I know, many people in Japan enjoy playing games whether they're children or adults. Just in a nearby gaming center, there are a lot of parents that bring their kids to play games together. This is why the game industry will be a business that caters to people of all ages, from a child to an adult.”

“Really? However, contrary to the 70s, the Atari shock caused a stagnation to the current game industry; so, I don't know if it's right to jump into the market.”

“How about taking a step forward when everyone else is backing off?”

“Huh? You actually want me to jump into this sinking hell?”

## Chapter 9 : Toy Company (5)

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“Currently, nobody is willing to jump in. Thus, if you take the risk and do so, you would be able to monopolize the market as the president of Mintendo.”

“A monopoly~ Haha. That’s truly a delightful thing to hear as a business man.”

President Yamauchi wildly laughed as he must have liked my answer.

“You talk about very interesting stories, just like Gunpei said. You’re young for sure; however, you have a view that makes it seem as though you can see through to the future.”

After president Yamauchi said that, I felt a prick in one corner of my heart. He didn’t age for nothing; there was a saying that as you get older, you may lose sight in exchange for wisdom...

“But... You know what... There’s no meaning in succeeding just within Japan. Rather than being restricted to a tiny island-country, we have to break through to the American market to call it a true success.”

“Doesn’t Mintendo currently have a branch in the States?”

“Yes, but it’s focusing more on the toy business than the game industry. The game industry in the U.S. is currently completely

dead due to the Atari Shock. I'm saying that no toy shop is ordering our Family consoles."

Even in the states, the 1980s was a period where toy shops ordered gaming consoles and sold them rather than the gaming-specific stores that sold them. In other words, no matter how great a gaming device was, if it couldn't get passed to the toy store and be displayed there, there was no where to sell them; thus, I answered like this.

"We can say they're not games."

"What!? You're saying we should not call a gaming device a gaming device? You must not know something since that's against the product sales regulation."

"Put a simple robot that moves back and forth with the package and call it a toy."

"What...?"

President Yamauchi stared at me with a bewildered expression before picking up the phone on his desk and dialing a number.

"Is this the overseas department? Come here right this instant, to my office, and take in this new recruit."

This was how I was not assigned to the game development department nor the console invention department, but the

overseas branch.

Something was not right here?

Hey you bastards! I'm a game developer!! You're making a big mistake!!!

&

The next day.

I opened my eyes in the dorm that Mintendo had provided for me.

Hmm... This is worse than a hotel, but it's the housing that Mintendo provided~ Eh~ It's not bad? More than anything else, it's close to the company; I felt like I was being bred for work, but I'll just say that's because of my mood.

To think that the start of the day for this company in the 1980s began with morning exercise... I stood in front of the office building and moved according to the instructions of the announcer. I tried to do the exercises half-heartedly at first, but seeing the employees around me pouring their heart into the movements, I also tried my best to follow the announcer.

“Let's. Work. Hard~!!”

“Waaaahhhh~”

As the last command ended, the employees of Mintendo marched forward like soldiers with a stiff walk.

“I’m going crazy...”

I muttered in Korean as I followed behind them. The 1980s was a strange period in time where collectivism was valued above individualism.

&

“Mr. President, why is Kang-kun being assigned to the foreign office department? I recommended him so he should obviously be placed in the device development team...”

“Hey Gunpei, you introduced him to me and now you’re just trying to slurp him away to your own department? Mr. President, I had a conversation with Kang-kun and I firmly believe he should come to my software department.”

“Shut up!! I interview every employee and place them in the department that’s best suited for them. Kang Junhyuk is going to the foreign office department no matter what. His resume even has English listed as his special skill; on top of that, this guy will deal a huge blow to the American market!!”

The three leaders who would be the major figureheads of



Mintendo were fighting over me. As soon as the news was announced that I would be designated to the foreign office department, Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru immediately came to the president's office and made a ruckus to take me away.

“Hey you bastards!! I'm the president!!”

Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru had no choice but to close their mouths after President Yamouchi's furious shout. I, who was listening to their conversation in the corner, almost bursted out in laughter. I mean, how joyful was it for them to fight for me, to bring me to their department?

But I couldn't let this situation go on so I carefully eased my way into the conversation.

“Excuse me, but can I say something?”

“What? A newbie wants to talk when the top brass is discussing? You sure are confident. Alright, let's hear what you have to say.”

“I thought there would be no end to this so I'll arrange a simple traffic control.”

“Traffic control? Your analogy is great? Haha!”

President Yamauchi brazenly laughed it off. As expected, he was a man with a quick temper and made decisions immediately.

“First of all Mr. Niseko, I believe that I gave you all the advice that I could give for the mobile device. If you implemented a screen that organically displayed the graphics and a cartridge system for the games, the prerequisite to the next model would be perfect. It’ll be difficult to make the performance better than the current 8 beat Family console so in exchange, try to lower the price as much as possible. The current price of the Family console is 14,800 Yen so it should at least be lower than that so the customers would be more open. If there is a way to lower the price by just 1,000 Yen, proceed to do so.”

“Hmm.... That’s undoubtedly correct. We can make our own cartridge system; as for the organic display, the only problem would be finding the best possible unit price.”

“We can expect massive orders once it goes into production so try to bulk order the parts beforehand. That way, we can acquire good quality materials for a reduced price.”

As I said that, President Yamauchi stared at me and muttered.

“Look at this man? You’re well informed about business dealings with your young age.”

I turned my head toward President Yamauchi and flashed a smile.

“Next, President Yamauchi. I don’t have any qualms about placing me into the foreign affairs department. If you give me a

chance, I will try my best to make the Family console a big success in the American market. But...”

“But?”

“Please don’t put me as a cannon fodder in the battle field without even a weapon.”

“What are you saying?”

“The current Family console is in its beginning state, even in Japan. The only title that could be successful in the U.S. is Donkey Kom. If it keeps going on like this, we will be called a ‘Donkey Kom machine’ and none of our other titles will sell. Currently, we are supplying the device and the software for the users, but in the future, the arcade companies would turn their gaze toward our Family console.”

“Then can we simply let time take its course?”

“Of course, that’s where Mr. Shigeru comes in. At present, Mr. Shigeru is the best candidate for developing a game concept that would be a big hit. We should capitalize on this opportunity and go into production at the same time with the title. If it’s possible, how about making the board parts and sending them to the game centers in America beforehand? I think it would become an incredible weapon for when the Family console is released in America.”

Now~my ‘Traffic Control’ here is done.

“This is the end of what I wanted to say.”

“From all the years that I was the President of Mintendo, this is the first time I’ve seen a employee that could confidently charge in and speak his mind. Yo Gunpei, are all Koreans like this?”

“I-I don’t know?”

“Your personality is like a breath of fresh air~ Alright, I’ll let you do what you want. Shigeru, take Kang-kun and quickly start making that Marigee or Massagee or whatever.”

“Yes sir~!!”

Shigeru replied with vigor, as if he was satisfied with the President’s decision, and circled his gaze to me. Yes~ Let’s make it together. A legendary game that would be the biggest hit in the entire world...

&

“This is not right... Why is this so awkward?”

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah Kang-kun, you came at just the right time. The application of the Side Scrolling technology for the new Marigee game is proceeding smoothly, but don't you think the movements look awkward?”

“Ah~ Is that so?”

Mr. Shigeru and I were concurrently sharing a project, so it was very fun for me. The basic formula for Super Marigee was being coded at a crazy speed with Mr. Shigeru and I working together. However, for the past few days, Mr. Shigeru was resolutely moving Marigee around in an empty stage.

I already had a possible solution to the problem, but I didn't spoon feed him the answer. Was this like how one might feel when they looked down at a student taking a test while holding the answer sheet?

If I told him the answer, Super Marigee would be released that much faster, but I was waiting for a special something right now.

Time flew by and on a certain day in November.

“Mr. Shigeru, the demo disk for the Family console has just arrived?”

“Ah, I'm a little busy right now so please put it on top of that table.”

Mr. Shigeru, who was intensively researching the movement of Marigee, did not even take a glance at the package that the employee brought. Mintendo took the lesson from the Atari Shock to heart and was directly inspecting the games that would be produced for the Family console. The inspection was a system where, we at the inventions team, personally tested the games and if it was satisfactory, we would send it to the cartridge manufacturer. If it was to be compared with 2015, it was similar to how an application producer would have the app tested before it was released in the app store.

I opened the package that was on top of the table in the place of the busy Mr. Shigeru. The package was from a strange company by the name of 'HEG' research facility. The moment I looked at the name of the sender, my fingertips wildly trembled.

'It came. It finally came!!!'

I quickly tore open the package that was from the sender, Katawa Satoshi. The label on the small floppy disk read 'Balloon Fight'.

Yes, this was what I've been waiting for all along!!

"Kang-kun? What's the matter...?"

"Mr. Shigeru, do you want to play this game together as a mood refresher?"

"Should we? Ah~ I can't figure this out at all... It was moving left

and right according to my commands, but why is it that when the Side Scrolling is switched on, I feel this frustration welling up?”

“Let’s cool our head and play this instead of thinking too deeply.”

“I think my already terrible mood would get even worse when I play this kuso game?”

(TL: ‘kuso’ = garbage)

“But we’re gonna have to test this out anyway.”

I sat on the stool along with Mr. Shigeru and turned on the floppy disk that the HEG research facility sent us.

(TL: For those of you who are confused: Shigeru and our MC are currently working in the same department and basically testing games that software companies are sending them while also trying to perfect the Side Scrolling Technology)

## Chapter 10 : Toy Company (6)

---

As the screen turned on, along with the playful music, we played around with the cross-shaped controls to get a sense of familiarity first. It seemed like the game was split into 1P and 2P, so two players would be able to enjoy it concurrently.

“Mmm~ My first impression isn’t bad? Start it.”

I pressed the start button, for the 2 player mode, and I started up the game. After a brief moment, two characters, each with 3 balloons attached to them, appeared on the opposite ends of the screen.

“It looks ordinary?”

I lightly pressed the A button, and I let the character hover in the air. After levitating up in the air, the character subsequently descended down like it was actually hung on the balloons. As I continuously pressed the button, it boinged up and further up into the the sky; with a bow in the character’s hands, it started to defeat the incoming enemies.

“So it’s a shooting game... Why is it so hard to move the character?”

I answered with a bright smile.

“I don’t know. The controls are hard to move around; it’s as if



they are attached to real balloons?”

“Why is it that it doesn’t move properly even after I press the controls!? Arghhh~~”

-Poof~!!

In the end, Shigeru-san’s character lost a balloon after colliding with an enemy.

(TL: Changes from Shigeru-san to Shigeru-san)

“The operation got even harder after losing a balloon~!!”

-Poof~!!

However, I was nimbly moving about and shooting down the enemies with my arrows. I played this game a lot as a kid, so the controls weren’t particularly hard.

The point of ‘Balloon Fight’ was not to spam the buttons and fly as high as possible, but to find a suitable momentum and keep the balloons bouncing.

“Kang-kun, aren’t the controls hard for you!? How are you so good at this game?”

I grinned and ignored Shigeru-san's question, and I focused on controlling my character. After a while, one of my arrows missed its target and pierced through Shigeru-san's balloon.

-Poof~!!

-BeeBoBeeeee...

“What!? It bursted after being hit by friendly fire? What the hell is this bullshit?!”

“Mmm~ It only makes the game more fun for me?”

“What!? No!! Kang-kun~!! Don't COME NEAR ME~!!!”

-Poof~!! Poof~!!

After I dodged every arrow that Shigeru-san shot at me, I collided with his character and popped the balloons. The results showed up in the blink of an eye, and it was a GAME OVER for Shigeru-san.

“Hey, let's have a rematch. To kill an ally, you bastard.”

This was the uniqueness of 'Balloon Fight'... That evening, the employees from our Invention Department went completely crazy from taking turns enjoying 'Balloon Fight.' The fact that you could pop an ally's balloons gave a unique kind of enjoyment. In the end, the key to surviving was to avoid friendly fire rather than

defeating the enemies.

“Ah~ Why is this so fun? ‘Balloon Fight’ would become an incredible game after we tweak the awkward operations a bit~!!”

One employee exclaimed in pleasure while he enjoyed ‘Balloon Fight.’ However, my thoughts were different.

“I actually feel that the controls are what’s multiplying this game’s entertainment?”

Shigeru-san, who was watching the gameplay from the side, opened his mouth while he stroked his chin.

“The controls are definitely difficult; however, somehow it feels incredibly natural. It almost feels as if one was controlling a real life? How would that work?”

At that moment, I dodged an arrow that was flying towards me, and I rapidly spam-clicked the fly button; my character, who was attached to the balloons, started to rise quickly into the sky. At that moment, Shigeru-san’s eyes flashed with a shining light.

“Accelerometer?”

He finally figured it out... However, the fellow Invention Department employees couldn’t understand Shigeru-san’s word.

“What? What do you mean by that?”

“They’ve implemented an accelerometer to the movements!! That’s right! When the speed reaches its highest point, and you press the opposite arrow key, you can feel the natural ‘Pop’ recoil from the inertia. That’s why we find this natural reaction to be uncomfortable. To think someone was able to simulate inertia in a program. Where was this game made!?”

“It was made in the HEG Research Facility by Kawata Satoshi??”

“I’m going to make an appointment with him immediately. Kang-kun, you should come with me.”

Now I’m meeting Kawata Satoshi, what an unexpected surprise? I nodded my head to Shigeru-san, and I swiftly put on my suit.

&

Kawata Satoshi. This man, who passed away before I travelled to 1983, would be the 4th president of Mintendo. As the CEO of Mintendo, as well as a game developer, he was a hero that saved Mintendo from the 2000 crisis. In addition to that, he was the brains responsible for bringing mobile devices to be the leading figurehead of Mintendo.

The games that he made – such as Balloon Fight, Karby, Father – were recorded into the annals of art, and he would eventually make a countless number of games along with Shigeru-san.

“But, Shigeru-san, this address seems to be in an office in Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo!?”

“It does not matter, let’s move to Shinkansen in the evening.”

Shigeru-san seemed to have found the answer to the problem he had while making Marigee. I followed behind his zealous back, and we headed to the Tokyo Station.

“Should we have just slept early and come back tomorrow?”

“That’s what I was trying to say...”

Sometimes, someone’s overexcitement could make others suffer like this...

&

The next day.

After staying at a hotel for the night, we woke up early and headed straight for the software inventions office in the HEG Research Facility. The office that produced ‘Balloon Fight’, that managed to enamor Kumamoto Shigeru-san to this extent, was laced with a very stern atmosphere as it was a place where simple programs for electronic calculators and printers were made.

“Excuse me, who did you come here for again?”

“We’re looking for Kawata Satoshi, is he not present at the moment, perhaps?”

“Kawata? Hmm, Kawata... Oii, was there a person named Kawata Satoshi in our office?”

A big burly man who seemed to be an office employee asked the worker next to him. The male employee who was looking through a report replied annoyedly.

“Ah, he’s that part-time student.”

The burly man slapped his hands and nodded his head as if he finally remembered. He’s saying Kawata is a part-timer here? Then that means he’s not even an official employee. I turned my head and Shigeru-san, he couldn’t contain his stunned expression either.

“A part-timer?”

“Yes, he should be arriving at 2 P.M.”

“Ah, then we will visit again in the afternoon.”

If it was going to be like this, why did we even suffer through that entire ordeal last night? We could’ve just left this morning...

After we came out of the office, we stared at each other with a blank face. Where would we spend the rest of the 2 hours? At that moment, a man in his mid 20s walked past us and headed for the HEG Research Facility. Huh? This person looked incredibly familiar...?

Having a 5:5 hair-splitter-line ratio with an appearance that was not ordinary, he was not much different from the someone I remember in 2015.

“Excuse me, Kawata-san!?”

“Yes?”

“You are Kawata Satoshi-san, right?”

“Yes, that’s me? Who are you?”

We found him!! Shigeru-san and I briefly took turns looking at him and asked Kawata-san with a confused expression.

“Were you the Kawata Satoshi that sent ‘Balloon Fight’ to Mintendo?”

“Ah~ it was sent over there that fast. Haha~ How was it? Was it fun?”

He had an ordinary and professional image, but his 4th

dimensional creativity skills allowed him to take the position as the CEO of Mintendo without being related to the previous CEO in any way. I met another 24 year old prodigy that would lead Mintendo in the future.

&

“Ah~ so what you’re saying is that the point of the game was, after repeatedly clicking the button more and more to increase the speed of the character in a certain direction, you would forcibly decrease the reaction time and simulate inertia.”

Programming was like reenacting reality with numbers. If Marigee started running at the speed of 1, after two seconds, the speed would increase to 2, then 3.

Jumping in such a situation would cause the system to calculate the distance by taking into account the current speed.

‘However, if the player suddenly moved in the opposite direction, the speed variable would not pummel down to -1 immediately, but slowly decrease from 4 to 3, 2, 1, 0, and finally -1’ was the explanation given by Satoshi.

(TL: A speed of -1 would equal 1 in the other direction)

“My mind is finally becoming clearer. Kawata-kun, you’ve been a really big help. About your Balloon Fight, what do you say about coming into our company and working on the game together? It



will definitely turn into an amazing project.”

“Thank you for asking, but I have some things left to do at the HEG Research Facility.”

“Really? That’s a shame. However, if you ever happen to change your mind, give us a call back.”

Shigeru-san gave his business card to Kawata-kun. During the train ride back, Shigeru-san couldn’t sit still as he was hyped about returning and fixing Marigee’s movements as soon as possible.

Now, the prerequisite to the making of Super Marigee was all met. The product would be finished soon, but there is the cartridge production time. Super Marigee would debut in 1984~?

It was a project that would be released in 85, so it was pulled forward by 1 year...

Gunpei-san’s mobile gameboy seemed like it would be released faster than the original release date too; I felt that history was being sped up after I arrived in this period.

Although I would have to wait a little more to see if all of this was the right decision to make...

&

“Everyone, good work. Toast to the completion of Super Marigee, Kanpai~!!”

“Kanpai~!!!”

24, December, 1983. Christmas eve.

The video game industry’s first Side Scrolling technology was integrated into Super Marigee. The Marigee Brothers that was released last September was already sweeping a storm, so there was a lot of anticipation for this year’s Super Marigee.

Yamauchi-san was tremendously happy, as well, to the news that the Family console was selling like hotcakes due to Donkey Kom and the Marigee Brothers. If he wasn’t this ecstatic, would he still be happily chattering away at the Invention Department’s celebratory party?

“Look here Shigeru, how many copies do you think your new game would sell!? Mmm? 1 million!? 2 million?? Wahahahahaha~~”

It was a bomb that would sell 10 million copies worldwide. I brightly smiled in my mind and took a gulp from the beer bottle.

“Mr. President, I didn’t make this alone. In all honesty, if it wasn’t for Kang Junhyuk-kun, there was no way I would’ve made Super Marigee this quickly.”

“Right, right. Hey~yo, Kang-kun~!! Where are you!?”

“Here I am.”

“Good, good~ that’s right, stay there. I’ll come over~!!”

President Yamauchi was already piss drunk so he lumbered over to me with a weird dance.

“Kuhahahahaha~ Where did this gem of a worker roll over from and make me so happy~!!”

Heh~ He was no different from a drunkard... I slightly stepped away from the intoxicated alcohol-smelling President Yamauchi and awkwardly smiled.

“Kang-kun... it was a fortuitous accident meeting you. If I had not stepped out to buy a packed lunch before boarding the train...”

“Shaddap Gunpei!! I heard that story from you over a 100 times!!”

3 months after entering Mintendo, I was adjusting well to the life in 1983. The employees at the Invention Department were very friendly, and there was no one who held a grudge against me yet. I had no time to spend money as well, so my account balance was currently soaring sky high.

I had no worries as everything was going well. Let’s keep this

atmosphere going and end 1984 on a happy note~ At that moment, President Yamauchi looked at me with quite a serious expression, and he spoke.

“Kang Junhyuk-kun.”

“Yes, President.”

“Now that I handed you a weapon, isn’t it time for you to go to America?”

“What...?”

# Chapter 11 : Attacking The American Market (1)

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Since then, one month had passed. January 25th, 1984. I entrusted the Super Marigee cartridge production management to Shigeru-san, and I was currently in the U.S. along with Gunpei-san.

“Aaughh! Fuck!! It’s freezing!!! Why couldn’t you at least send us after winter passed? You son of a dog Yamauchi!!”

“Mmm? Kang-kun? What did you say?? I thought I heard the president’s name.”

“I was talking to myself in Korean.”

I dragged the suitcase that wasn’t even rolling well at all because of the snow, and I continued walking on the streets of New York.

-Creak...

We entered a shabby hotel that the Mintendo’s U.S. office reserved for us.

-Shhheauuk...

What was that? I think something on the floor just cracked?

I mean, I can't believe they would reserve a hotel like this for the employees from the headquarters. President Yamauchi is a bit unruly, but he tends to have an eye for employing workers...

Standing beside me, Gunpei-san's expression didn't seem too good either.

"Are all American hotels like this? The facilities are too inadequate compared to Japan..."

"How can that be? It's not like people here don't know anything about hotels; they must've just reserved the cheapest motel they could find."

"Eyy, how can that be...The manager of the American branch, Yamata-san, is the son-in-law of our president. Would a person like that accommodate us like so?"

"Anyways Gunpei-san, I can't sleep here. Let's change hotels."

"What!? If we move to another hotel, we would have to pay for it out of our own pockets?"

"You think I don't have enough money to spend on something like this? We don't know how many months we're staying here; do you want to keep living here?!"

In the end, I dragged Gunpei-san and climbed into a taxi that was parked in front of the hotel.[\[1\]](#)

“Please take me to the best hotel around here.”

“Yes, sir~”

“Kang-kun, where are we going?”

“I asked him to take us to the best hotel in this area.”

“What?! L-Look here... Kang-kun, is this really alright?”

After a while, we arrived in front of a grandiose hotel with brilliantly glowing lights. It was unquestionably different from all of the other hotels in the downtown area; the decorations were filled with New Year’s celebration messages. Finally, a place that looks habitable...

“Yeah, it has to be at least this much in order for me to fall asleep.”

“This place looks too expensive! Uh? Kang-kun!? Kang-kun!!”

I ignored Gunpei-san’s voice behind me, and I entered the hotel dragging my suitcase. I was about to be turned into a block of ice; this was when money should be used. It was a relief that I exchanged a sizable amount of cash just in case. As I walked past

the bustling lobby to the front desk, a blue-eyed blonde haired beauty greeted me with a smile.

“How may I help you, sir?”

“I’d like to reserve a room please.”

“Did you make a reservation?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Ok. Would you like a single or double.”

“I’m planning to stay for about a month. Give me the best room you have.”

“Yes, sir~”

Gunpei-san blankly stood beside me, and he was desperately trying to understand our conversation.

“One... One month!? Kang-kun, did you just say you would reserve the best room in the hotel for an entire month!?”

“Yes... Wouldn’t it be best to wait for at least a month and assess our situation before stretching the length?”



“W-what are you saying right now? We didn’t come here to play; we have business here.”

“Who said anything about playing? Work is work and resting is resting. Wouldn’t we work harder if we had a good rest?”

“But reserving a suite room is too...”

“Wup... Gunpei-san, were you trying to share a bed with me in a single room?!”

“No, that was not what I meant~!!”

The game was already over. While we were going back and forth, the receptionist finished the setup and handed us the room keys.

“Thank you, Happy New Year~”

I took the key. I then headed to the elevator after thanking the receptionist.

“Haaa, how should I report this situation to the president?”

“You have a mountain of worries Gunpei-san. The hotel fees would be paid by me and not the company fund, so what’s the problem?”

The price for one night at the best hotel in New York in 1983 was \$149 dollars per night. Of course, it added up to an enormous sum of \$4,500 per month, but what was that to me~ It didn't even reach the interest from the bank, so I stepped onto the elevator with a peaceful mind.

“Kang-kun must not know because you're Korean, but, in Japanese society, how other people think of you is important... If our comrades in Japan found out that we were staying in such a luxurious hotel like this, they will definitely think that we came here to play around.”

There was a saying that the Japanese commonly possessed a Honne (Inner Heart) and Tatema (Outward personality). One never knew what they were thinking in their Honne, but their outward appearance exhibited a polite and mature mannerism. Maybe because their inners and outward actions differed vastly, Japanese people always seemed to be extremely conscious of what others thought.

“We just have to do a great job here and leave. Why do you have to scrutinize every little detail?”

Ah~ whatever~ I'm tired as hell after flying for almost 15 hours, and I'm too tired to even think about that!! I should take a hot shower and sleep.

“Kang-kun, money is great after all~”

An early morning after waking up from the cushiony bed.

That was the first sentence from Gunpei-san after waking up. So that was the comment he makes after whining while following me last night? I smirked and I came down from the bed and started organizing my luggage.

I was too tired last night, so I flung the suitcase somewhere. I ended up rushing to the showers, so it was randomly rolling around in a corner. As I threw a sneaky look towards the other side, Gunpei-san's belongings were neatly organized; as expected from a Japanese person. This guy is so cheap... if he had the spare time, he could've organized my luggage too.

Gunpei-san was waiting for me with a burning cigarette in his hands at the hotel lobby after finishing his breakfast at the hotel. It was a common sight as anti-smoking laws in the 1980s were not fully developed yet.

As I carried my coat and briefcase, I entered into the lobby. Gunpei-san smiled and stood up from his seat.

“Well then, should we visit the American branch office?”

“Let's do that.”

We took the taxi, and we headed towards the American branch office.

“Ah, are you two Gunpei-san and Kang Junhyuk-kun from

Japan?”

My first impression of meeting branch manager Yamashi for the first time in the U.S was... a loser in its entirety. There was no liveliness to be found even in the morning hours of work, and, before anything else, the pungent smell of whiskey wafted over every time Yamashita-kun opened his mouth.

“Nothing will change from you people coming here; the console game industry is a complete dead end in the American market.”

His voice contained no hope at all. The son-in-law of President Yamauchi, who was said to have graduated from Tokyo University, was losing all of his fighting spirit in the American office.

Actually, the downfall of console gaming was caused by the Atari company, but it was also the period of a booming computer industry as well.

-A game device will ruin your child's academics, but a computer will send your child to a university.

A marketing ad from a computer company that came in the hotel newspapers early in the morning – this seemed to deal the final blow to the console market that was barely heaving its last breath.

This was a piece of information that I didn't know, but President Yamauchi had been testing the waters for the American market before Nintendo was released. The family console that was

released on the 15th of July was already being contacted with dealers in the United States from April.

However, due to the game industry completely dying out, electronic stores or toy companies, no one was willing to make a deal with the Family console; without a single unit of sales, it was chucked away to a storage room. Yamashita-kun, who was fired up at the start, gradually started to lose his confidence. It seemed like he got drunk everyday.

There was no benefit in staying here any longer...

I breathed a long sigh, and I stood up from my seat.

“Kang-kun? Where are you going?”

“We should assess the current market first. I’m going to experience, first hand, just how serious the situation is.”

“Keke... Yeah, go ahead~ Oh right, it would be good if you stop by the pharmacy and pick up a band aid before you leave? You can at least slap that on when you needlessly provoke shop owners. Kekeke~”[\[2\]](#)

“First of all, Yamashita-kun, I’ll take one Family unit for experimental purposes.”

“Do whatever you want.”

“Oii, Kang-kun, count me in as well~!!”

We came out of the American branch office, caught another taxi and asked the driver to drive to the most famous toy store near by.

“Yamashita changed. He must’ve suffered through many hardships in America.”

“He seemed no different from an alcoholic?”

“President Yamauchi used to take great pride in him, how did he...”

Failures made humans more and more timid. A person who has not persevered through any failures would fall harder, like the current Yamashita-kun...

“Get the fuck out of my store!!!”

“Store owner, please listen to m-”

“Fuck off~!! Don’t bring in that gaming device garbage into my store!!”

The reactions were more serious than I had anticipated. It was the same whether it was electronics store or a toy store. The kind store owner was immediately startled, as if he saw some ghost, as

soon as I took out the device from my box.

“This is... Yamashita-kun’s words were true. To think we would be rejected this harshly...”

Gunpei-san, who had his collar grabbed by the store owner, adjusted his necktie and sighed. So the game industry, as a whole, really was ruined... Then I should slightly change my plans accordingly? I put the Family inside the public lockers in the subway and started wandering around the toy stores.

First of all, let’s not reveal my identity as a salesperson and just inspect the toys. Then, I would at least be able to look around freely without the harassment from the employees.

As I wandered around, I stumbled upon a pile of randomly stacked game cartridges in the corner.

“What are these?”

“Th-they are Atari’s game cartridges. The supply is overstocked so we’re selling them for \$1 each.”

Wow... one dollar, so they were selling each unit for 1,000 Won? It would not even pay for half of the production costs. It really fell down by this much... Now I could understand the violent reactions of those shop owners. Gunpei-san and I stopped in many different toy stores, but the situation was the same everywhere.

“This is really... there’s no space for even a needle to go through.”

“Yeah... I’m hungry, so should we get a little something to eat while we talk?”

I went into the taxi and asked to go to the most expensive and delicious restaurant this time around. Although Gunpei-san wasn’t as proficient as me in english, he clicked his tongue and spoke to me.

“Why are you always looking for the most expensive things the first chance you get? A person lives well by saving his money.”

“Then should we stop at a hamburger joint?”

“Uh? Th-there’s no need. Let’s go together.”

If he was going to come anyways, he shouldn’t say that in the first place. I fell into a deep thought as I looked out the windows into the city.

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Notes:

[1] Kang-kun is going to be speaking perfect English to Americans, remember the ability from the Game & Watch that allowed him to learn 2 foreign languages?

[2] You know, because no shop was selling console games and the branch manager thought ‘Kang-kun’ would beg the shop keepers



to take in products from Mintendo

## Chapter 12 : Attacking The American Market (2)

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The market stagnation occurred as expected. I asked President Yamauchi to make the toy robot, but it would be hard to solely use that to wedge into the market...

At that moment, the taxi driver started a conversation with us, who were sitting in the back seat.

“Are you guys Japanese?”

“I’m Korean, and to my left is someone from Japan.”

“Korean? I don’t know much about Korea? But you’re saying one of you is a Japanese, right?”

“I’m the Japanese.”

As Gunpei-san answered with broken English. The taxi driver laughed and asked Gunpei-san:

“Oh~ Samurai~~!! Are the Japanese still walking around with a sword!?”

“Heh...”

Because traveling abroad was not common in this time period, there were various misunderstandings like this in the 80s. I was a bit sad when the taxi driver said he didn't know about Korea; however, was that to be expected when there were no world-shocking issues from Korea yet. It would be treated like a third world country, at least until the 1988 Olympics...

However, in reaction to the joke, Gunpei-san's expression was not very good. It was as if he felt mocked; Gunpei-san retorted with his broken English:

“This is the 20th century, Japan doesn't allow swords anymore; we're developing as a MDC that is competing back-to-back with the U.S.”

The taxi driver laughed and replied:

“Sorry, sorry. It was just a joke. A joke. Keke.”

Gunpei-san seemed as if he had not vented his frustration, and muttered in Japanese.

“If we're walking around with swords, is everyone in your country walking around with guns.”

Hoho, look at this middle aged man's temper. However, it really was not a wrong statement. Just like how Americans viewed the ninja as a symbol of Japan, you would think of a horse-riding cowboy as a symbol of America. Wait, guns? Cowboy??

At that instant, a memory of a childhood game flashed inside my head like lightning. It was the first shooting game that utilized the home TV and brought endless amounts of entertainment – ‘Duck Hunt’.

This is it!!

“You want me to make you a gun?”

Gunpei-san, who was cutting the tender beef steak, stopped his knifing and asked me.

“Yes, please make me an electronic gun.”

“An electronic gun?”

Gunpei-san was looking at me with an expression as if he had just swallowed ghost meat. I had no choice but to take my notebook out and start drawing a brief sketch with my pen. Yes, showing the idea with a picture would be easier...

“It’s a gun shaped like this. Thankfully, the Family console has an external port that can connect to the wire, so we can use that. When the gun is shot towards the TV screen, the corresponding target would be hit.”

The port was originally meant to be used in times of emergencies

– when the pad behind the screen malfunctioned – but we can use it for this purpose... As if Gunpei-san was hungering for more of my explanation, he put the steak dish to the side and speedily moved beside me.

“A new controller that acts as a gun is incredibly fascinating, but how would it be manufactured?”

“That’s up to you to figure out.”

“What...?”

The birth of a new innovation was produced when a spoonful of a brilliant idea is mixed with an engineer. In actuality, I had no idea how a target inside the TV would be affected when it’s shot from the outside. However, I definitely played this when I was younger, and this concept was invented by you in the first place, so I’m sure you would figure it out~

30 days after this episode. I was shaking hands with Gunpei-san at the international airport.

“This will be the gun that we’ll use to penetrate the American market. Gunpei-san, please give it your all when you return to Japan.”

“I was continuously thinking after I heard your explanation, Kang-kun, and I seemed to grasp the generally gist of how to go about inventing it. I will contact you immediately as soon as the

electronic gun is finished. But one more thing, who will code the software for the shooting game? Should I assign it to Shigeru-kun?”

“There’s no need. Shigeru-san should currently be busy inspecting the cartridges.”

“Then who should code it? Hmm...”

“I’ll code the software here.”

“What!? You’re going to make it here?”

“I’ll just casually make it while I investigate the current market situation... I’ll send you the beta through international mail as soon as it’s finished, so you can complete the product with Shigeru-san.”

“Casually? I really can’t fathom what is going on inside your head. An overflow of out-of-the-world ideas come spewing out as soon as you open your mouth; I can’t predict you at all~”

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

“Of course it’s a compliment. My work life is getting more and more entertaining after meeting you. Then, I’ll trouble you to assist Yamashita-kun and take care of the American market.”

“Don’t worry~”

After sending off Gunpei-san like that, I came out of the airport alone after a while. Then, I went directly towards the Nintendo American branch office. As I abruptly snatched the office door open, I discovered a very startled Yamashita-kun, who was pouring whiskey into a glass.

“Hey~ Can’t a person walk around more carefully?”

“You’re just an existence that sits on the table and drinks alcohol, don’t nag a busy employee on top of that.”

Yamashita-san looked at me with a ‘Did I hear wrong?’ expression.

“Do you think the gaming devices piled in the storage will go anywhere if you sit around and drink alcohol all day? You should be thinking of creating a path in any way you can.”

“Do you think I haven’t tried anything!? I can only go into advertising if there are stores are willing to stock these devices; games have become a dead industry!! The console is dead in the U.S. Even after I offered the factory price for the device, everybody still snorted!!”

“Then did you try to offer them money when they refused to stock the device?”

“What?”

“I asked if you offered any money to display the devices.”

“You crazy bastard!! Why would we pay to display our products in the market?”

“If they still don’t receive our products after the discount, we can pay them money to do so. Even if we sell the devices at the lowest possible price of 14,800 Yen, barely 1800 Yen comes back to us. We didn’t come to America to make a measly 1800 Yen profit, did we? First of all, the device itself has to sell so we can produce the cartridges and earn profit. And if the public’s opinion towards gaming devices are terrible, we can just change the name saying, ‘This is not a gaming device!!’”

“What? A gaming device is a gaming device, what else would it be?”

“Mmm... M.H.E.S. or short for Mintendo Home Entertainment System. How about it?”

“Mintendo Home Entertainment System...?”

“Let’s first get rid of the title ‘Game Console’ and start anew.”

And that was how the counter attack of Mintendo’s American branch office’s MHES begin.



“Finally, Yamashita-kun is trying to make something happen. That’s right~ Now he’s like my true son-in-law.”

Your son-in-law was a loser that was addicted to alcohol and Marijuana everyday? That’s why I’m personally holding the telephone and standing here like this... I took some time to soothe my voice and answered with my calmest tone.

“With the strategy that President Yamashita developed, we are planning to counter attack the American market with the new name.”

“Good~ Good. Whether you rename it to a MHES or OYES, it’s still from Mintendo. So how are you planning to attack.”

“Thankfully, I heard the Super Marigee game that started production last week is selling like a hot cake. Congratulations, President.”

“Wahaha~ Is that all? Along with Super Marigee, Donkey Kom and the original Marigee Brothers are selling as a set!! The demand for devices doubled as well, so the factory is working at full capacity, but even that is not enough.”

“I see. The momentum seems like you’ll scrape the pockets of every Japanese.”

“Kang-kun’s analogy is excellent as expected~ Yes, I am scraping

their pockets just like you said~ I'm regretting not stocking up very many products."

"Everything's going great~ Then take the devices stored in our American branch."

"What did you say? Why so??"

"We can't debut the new M.H.E.S. at the same time the old one is out, can we? I will make a brand new design for the console that would fit the American people's' tastes."

"What!? Hey, you bastard. It's a completed product already and all we have to do is start the production in a factory, but you're changing designs??"

"President Yamauchi, you should have a tremendous amount of funds acquired from the Game & Watch's success; you should invest at least this much if you're targeting the American market. The current Family's design has an extremely bad reputation amongst the Americans. Also, the design is standardized around asians, so the size is too small as well. It would be better to make it bigger and sturdier."

"Urghh... I still feel like I'm needlessly throwing away money."

"I haven't disappointed you until now. If you trusted me and sent me to this place, you should provide cover fire."

“Kaa... Alright. Then clean out the items in the American storage room and ship it over here first. We’re having a shortage of devices anyways.”

“Thank you. Ah... And one more thing. This is something President Yamashita and I decided upon together but...”

“Now what?”

“We decided to give display fees to stores that host our Family console.”

“Display fee? What’s that?”

“Simply put, if they display our devices in their stores, we would give them remuneration depending on the location of the display. For one month, the payments for the storefronts are 1000 dollars and the back of the store would be 300 dollars.”

“What? You’re wanting to pay them just for displaying the items? Whose mouth did that crazy idea originate from?”

“Haha... Don’t get too worked up, President. We’re not asking to this forever, but just for 2 months as a type of an event. Just awhile ago, I heard from Gunpei-san that the electronic gun problem was resolved and it’s ready to go into production, the robots that I told you about last time are already completed, right?”

“Yeah, they’re completed. The electronic shooting game that you

made is excellent as well. The employees are enjoying it in the rest area nowadays.”

“Then for the U.S. model, please put the toy robot and the electronic gun as a set and package it for me.”

“What? Then it would be hard to meet the unit price of 14,800 Yen.”

“That’s alright, I will price it at 199 U.S. dollars.”

“What!? You’re going to jack up the price for an item that wouldn’t even sell for 149 bucks?”

“The reason that it didn’t sell for even 149 dollars was because it didn’t get any chance to be displayed, not because of its lack of quality.”

“Hur... This is really. If it really sells for \$199 a unit, it would be more than enough to cover the display fee... What to do...”

“President...”

“Mmm? Stop calling me like that every time. I’m afraid for the next thing that’s going to spew out of your mouth.”

“If you send me out here with a gun, you should provide the bullets as well. Just close your eyes and shoot with a fresh

resolve.”

“Euuhh... I’ll give you the money!! I’ll give it to you!! But if you fail, know that you will never step into Japanese soil ever again.”

Hur hur~ If I fail, I’ll step into Korean soil~

# Chapter 13 : Attacking The American Market (3)

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It has been almost four months since I arrived in America. After the phone call with the President last month, all of the devices in the storage room were shipped to Japan; the newly designed M.H.E.S. also came in today. The last Family console had a toy-like cartridge system that required the thick cartridge to be put in vertically; however, the newly designed console was changed so that the slot was in the front of the console and the cartridge disc resembled a thin CD. In addition, the wires for the controllers were lengthened and made bigger to compensate for the large American living rooms – in contrast to the tiny Japanese households.

“This design morphed it into a completely different item; however, do you think people will trust it just because the outward appearance changed?”

“They probably haven’t even glanced at the old model, so it’ll be fine.”

Mr. Yamashita quit drinking alcohol and drugs at the same time the American Mintendo branch was renamed to M.H.E.S. After clearing out the Family consoles that were gathering dust in the storage room, Mr. Yamashita told me some of his headache had been alleviated. It seems that keeping the devices that no one had wanted was a major cause of stress to him.

“Now~ should we start attacking with our new strategy?”

I took out the sample M.H.E.S. machine, and I smiled towards Mr. Yamashita.

A while later, we were standing in front of ‘Toy World’, the biggest toy store in New York.

“I hope we don’t get dragged out by our collars again...”[\[1\]](#)

Mr. Yamashita must have already gotten nervous. He loosened the strings on his necktie, and he let out a sigh. I also had a dangerous fallout with an angry toy store owner in the past; I swallowed my saliva, and I tried smiling awkwardly.

“How could that happen...? Everything will go great today!”

-Cling~~

As I cautiously pushed open the front entrance and entered the store, the store employees greeted us with a smile; they were obviously part-time employees, judging by their outfits. A manager approached us after a brief moment.

“How may I be of assistance?”

“Hello. We’re from a company called M.H.E.S. We’ve invented a new toy, and we wanted to discuss it with the owner here.”

“M.H.E.S.? This is the first time I’m hearing of it.”

“It’s a newly registered American company that is originally from Japan. We’ve developed a moving robot and an electronic toy gun.”

The manager showed a slight apprehension when I mentioned the electronic gun.

“An electronic gun? We deal with toys suited for children. We can’t stock toys that can hurt people.”

As soon as the manager stopped talking, I immediately whipped out the electronic gun. It didn’t seem threatening at all with its gray coloring and the friendly design.

“Don’t worry; No bullets can be shot from our gun.”

“Hmm... I’ll take you to the owner’s office first.”

With a slightly suspicious expression, the manager took us to the inside of the store, into the owner’s office. Good, the real fight starts now. Inside the office, a stereotypical fat man was fanning himself with a roll of documents. Even though winter had passed, and it was currently spring, he was wearing a summer attire.

“Smith? Who are these people?”



“They’ve apparently invented a new toy, and they’re from a company called M.H.E.S.”

“A new toy? A toy is that and that. What is there to be new about?”

The owner rudely replied with a gruff manner, and he tilted the corners of his mouth upwards in a mocking sneer.

“You are Japanese? Humorous, humorous! The yellow monkeys do make toys well, so I guess I should take a glance at it?”

His disgusting attitude is just... Sigh. In this country, we were pretty much always treated like inferior beings; we put down the new toys on the table.

“A robot? And a gun? What’s so new about these?”

“These items are electronic-based toys that work by connecting to this machine right here.”

“A machine? What the hell is this? Is this perhaps a gaming device?”

“No... This is a home entertainment computer.”

“It’s a computer?”

“Yes. You can use it to move the robot and activate the gun with it. Should I briefly demonstrate it for you?”

“Hmmmmmm... Do it.”

The owner leered at me as if he would kick me out the moment I made the slightest blunder. Mr. Yamashita must have been nervous as well; he straightened his knees, and he looked at me with a worried expression.

First, I connected the robot to the external port, and I pressed the power switch. The robot that was bundled with the Family package was able to be activated without a separate cartridge, so I was able to immediately operate the robot with the controller. Thankfully, President Yamauchi didn't take my hint literally and added an arm to the robot to lift up objects, so I picked the electronic gun on the table. As both the arms of the robot squeezed towards the electronic gun like a pincer, lifting up the object, a cry of exclamation came out of the owner's mouth.

“Ho... Interesting, but what does the gun do?”

“Ah, we need a TV to use this gun.”

“TV!? Why does a mere toy need to use a TV? Isn't it a gaming device?”

“No. This is a fun program designed to let families enjoy shooting practice together.”

I have no idea what I just said. Saying that a game is not a game... It's a comment that would startle a peerless martial arts master. As the owner was wearing an extremely suspicious look on his face, I carefully connected the cable to a TV lying in the corner of the office.

I knew the owner wouldn't sit still if he caught me in the act of inserting the cartridge; thus, I inserted the cartridge inside the gaming device beforehand. After I disconnected the robot from the external port, switching to the electronic gun, I pressed down on the power switch. The text 'Duck Hunt' popped up on the TV at the same time the owner and the manager's faces turned ugly.

I became anxious to pass the loading screen, so I rapidly pressed the trigger in hopes that the main screen would pass by quickly. Subsequently, as the green grassland was shown on the screen, a vein popped out of the owner's temples.

“This is a Gaming Console!!”

-Pang~!!

At that moment, I pointed the barrel towards the TV screen, and I pulled the trigger; a duck, which was flying up and around the screen, dropped with a Quack.

“Uh? What was that just now??”

-Piyoong~

-Pang~ Poosh~!! Piyoong~ Pang~ Poosh~!!

The ducks that were flying around on the screen were dropping one by one as I maneuvered the electronic gun.

“What’s happening? How is it possible to shoot the ducks inside of the TV with that gun?”

Of course he wouldn’t understand. They must be feeling shock akin to experiencing a 4D movie for the first time. Nothing was being fired from the actual muzzle of the electronic gun, but one duck after another refreshingly dropped dead inside of the TV screen with every pull of the trigger.

The owner and the manager were watching my gameplay as if they were possessed by a ghost. Mr. Gunpei was a genius after all; he achieved a very high quality within such a short deadline.

After going back to Japan, Mr. Gunpei spent countless nights researching data. While researching, Mr. Gunpei became fascinated with the refresh rate of TV screens, and the electronic gun that he invented was able to, albeit for a brief moment, forcefully affect the refresh rate of the TV screen.

The screen turned black for a fraction of a second the moment the trigger was pulled, but, because of it being an instantaneous moment, it was impossible to detect with the human eye.

Additionally, the flying ducks were coded with a corresponding ‘gray’ object while the electronic gun was coded to recognize a ‘white’ object.

What does this all mean? I actually don’t know. Anyways, the point was that the gun was forcefully designed to interfere with the TV and recognize the ducks. Mr. Gunpei was so happy, after he figured out the algorithm, that he called me, and he shouted ecstatically, ignoring the time difference...

He was rambling on and on about the method; however, I was half-awake at the time, so I don’t know very much either... I was just like ‘Ah~ You finally made it.’, and I went back to sleep...

“This is an entertaining toy for sure.”

“Do you find it to your liking?”

“Yeah, but the thing is...”

The Toy World owner’s eyes lit up, and he smirked. I knew from reading his boorish expression that this contract wouldn’t go as planned. His sharp eyes opened up the M.H.E.S., and he confirmed the ‘Duck Hunt’ game cartridge inside.

“You can’t fool my eyes. This is a video game no matter who sees it. You seem to be trying to pass it off as a toy with all of your effort and ship it to my store, but alright – our store will accept this.”

The Toy World president's words caused Mr. Yamashita's expression to go a full 180 degree turn. However...

“However, make it a specialized ‘Duck Hunt’ only machine; we don’t need any other cartridges. You think I don’t know about your schemes to add one decent game first, and then you circulate garbage games later?”

It was not hard to make a specialized ‘Duck Hunt’ only machine. However, this could never happen in the console industry where the software sales brought in the profits.

“That’s not true. Every game that our Mintendo makes goes through a rigorous quality check at the headquarters before being produced. The type of games that you are worrying about will not be produced for our device.”

“Don’t make me laugh!!”

In the end, Mr. Yamashita and I were chased out by the hands of the store employees.

“If you want to make a contract with us, make a ‘Duck Hunt’ specialty machine. Our Toy World doesn’t support gaming consoles anymore.”

The manager roughly tossed the box containing the M.H.E.S. to the ground and went back into the store. Fuck... My head.

Anyways, these American bastards do have good strength. When things don't go their way, they fling fellow human beings to the ground...

“As expected, this is challenging... To think that the opinions of the public are scary to this extent.”[\[2\]](#)

“As expected, it was not the right choice to come to a bloated-bigshot store first.”

“Bloated? What do you mean by that?”

“It's a Korean idiom for describing arrogant bastards. Anyway, let's move our location. There is nothing to see here.”

After I cleaned up the controller rolling around the ground, I straightened my body. Before I walked away from Toy World, I turned back and stared at the entrance, muttering.

“Fat pig, just you watch; I'll make you beg us to supply you with our items.”

In the end, Mr. Yamashita and I arrived at a small toy store in an obscure corner of New York where, In contrast to the main streets, we were on a very quiet and desolate road. The name of the store was ‘Toy Box’, and the comfortably decorated store had no employees; there was just a lone shop owner, overseeing the store.

“Hello, we’re the sales representatives from a company called M.H.E.S, and we wanted to inquire about shipping a new toy...”

A middle aged man behind the counters welcomed us with a smile.

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Notes:

[\[1\]](#) Clarification: This is the first toy store they’re visiting to debut their new marketing strat. Mr. Yamashita must have had a bad experience in the past with another store owner before Kang-kun came to America. x\_x

[\[2\]](#) Remember, the public hates anything related to video games after the Atari Shock



## Chapter 14 : Attacking The American Market (4)

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“Hello... I’m sorry to say this, but our store is planning to close next month. Are you sure?”

“You’re closing your shop?? How did...”

“Actually, there has been an influx of toy shops appearing near the downtown area, so our number of customers decreased quite a bit; it’s hard to keep the store running.”

“Ah, I’m sorry to hear that... We currently haven’t made any deals with toy stores yet; can we trouble you to take a look at our items?”

“Not at all. Come on inside.”

Mr. Yamashita and I breathed a huge sigh of relief at the kind treatment that was completely opposite from Toy World. As there was no separate office, we had to demonstrate the robot and Duck Hunt at the corner of the store.

“Ah, it’s an incredibly innovative system. However, it’s... a game?”

As expected, the operation method for Duck Hunt drew quite a bit of attention, but, due to the fact that it was a game, even the

owner of Toy Box was showing a hesitant expression. After all, half of the items displayed in Toy Box were abandoned cartridges from Atari.

“I love games too; however, as you can see, my store is on the verge of shutting down because I put too much trust in these Atari games. This is why I’m afraid to stock this machine.”

“We understand how you feel ten times over. However, our M.H.E.S. will not bring you the misfortune Atari did.”

I pulled out the prepared Super Marigee Brothers from my backpack. I was actually planning to take these out at Toy World when the atmosphere turned good; however, since we were kicked out, unable to showcase it, this was our first time to demonstrate it.

Because the owner of Toy Box had a high comprehension towards games, he instantly became stunned from experiencing the Side Scroll technology for the first time.

“This is truly incredible!!”

“This game is planned to go into the game center of our American branch soon.”

“Is that so. With this level of quality, I believe this game will surely be a big hit in the U.S. Especially regarding the moving background, and it’s incredible that the screen isn’t confined to a

set background like the conventional arcade; this is a completely new method!!”

The Toy Box owner was enjoying Super Marigee like a kid; however, that was only for a brief moment...

“If Atari... produced a game like this, then I would be able to continue running my store...”

Droplets of moisture were glistening in his eyes as if he was regretful that he finally met Super Marigee only today. Even Mr. Yamashita was giving a pained look towards the owner of Toy Box.

“You seem to love games very much. If your store didn’t have to close down, would you be willing to take in our Mintendo’s gaming device?”

“Of course, but I don’t have the ability to run this store anymore. I also don’t have the funds necessary to stock the device.”

“Alright. Then we will support you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Mintendo will provide you with 100 free units of M.H.E.S. and we will deposit three months worth of the store rent.”

After I said that, shock flashed across Mr. Yamashita’s face, who

was standing beside me, assessing the situation; he immediately started speaking to me in Japanese.

“Look here... Kang-kun. No matter how pitiful this guy is, we can't just give him 100 units without charge!!”

However, I ignored Mr. Yamashita, continuing to explain to the Toy Box owner, who was holding the controller.

“Our Mintendo is also introducing a program where we deposit \$1,000 as an incentive for displaying our devices on the display window.”

“Kang-kun!! President Yamauchi hasn't finalized his decision on this matter yet!!”

“However, since your store is in a precarious situation, we will add to that, providing three months worth of rent as the incentive. In exchange, we will manage the display window during those three months. What do you think?”

“You're saying that I would be able to run my store for three more months? Great! If this is possible, it's definitely an OKAY from me.”

“Then we will immediately stock our devices in your store tomorrow. Let's do a good job together.”

“Thank you... Thank you... Thank you very much...”

That was how the historical moment of the first ever contract for the M.H.E.S. model went down. Two weeks after that, thanks to its revolutionary gameplay, Super Marigee came over from Japan, rapidly diffusing throughout the American arcades.

“Mr. Wi-Wilson... Please grab onto that side.”

“Mr. Kang, right here?”

“Yes~!! Right there is fin... WARGHH!!!”

-Crumble~!! Crash...

“Oh!! Mr. Kang!! Are you alright?”

“I... I’m fine. I’m fine. Oww...”

“You’re still vigorous because you’re young. I would’ve broken my bones if it were me~ Hahaha~”

One month had passed since Mintendo’s M.H.E.S. was being displayed at Toy Box. I was currently putting up the banner in front of the Toy Box display window. After clearing away all of the other toys on the front display, I replaced them with the M.H.E.S. model as a premium item, we put up a video of the Super Marigee gameplay, along with a model of in-game items such as item boxes and brick-shaped blocks.

At that moment, the people who were passing by shouted in exclamation as the video of Super Marigee clearing a stage was replayed.

“Woah~!! Super Marigee~!!”

A passing kid pointed at the display window TV and exclaimed as I responded with a ‘Yeahhh~!!’ Shaking my fists, the kid laughed and clapped. After hanging the banner, Mr. Wilson and I went back inside Toy Box to discover beads of sweat rolling off of Mr. Yamashita, who was organizing the items in the storage room.

“You finished organizing already? Thank you for your hard work.”

“Mr. Wilson. I’ve put in the additional 200 units.”

“Thank you. Have a drink.”

Mr. Wilson handed a drink to Mr. Yamashita, who was wiping his sweat off with a handkerchief.

“Mr. Yamashita, you could’ve asked your employees to do this instead of doing the dirty work yourself.”

“No, no. A new road is slowly opening up thanks to you, Kang-kun; I can’t just sit back by myself. I’ve grown sick of holing up in

the office for the past eight months. Moving my body like this makes me feel like I'm working, so that's good~”

Mr. Yamashita became a completely new person from when I first met him. My first impression of him was a loser, but now, he became more like a human being. I smiled as I swallowed the drink.

“Excuse me, is this store selling the M.H.E.S. displayed outside?”

“Welcome~ customer! New stock just came in, so the item is immediately available for purchase~!!”

Mr. Yamashita wasn't the only one who had changed. Mr. Wilson contributed to the aggressive marketing strategy that, in turn, raised his sales tremendously. As he was originally a game lover, he was able to easily explain the operations to the customers. Because of him, most of the customers who entered the store directly purchased the M.H.E.S. from him.

Our initial sales were nearing almost 1,000 in this tiny store.

“Mommy, I want that pleeeeeeaaase.”

Seeing this scene, I almost lost control of myself, and I nearly burst out in laughter. That was how essential Super Marigee was as a complement to every customer who purchased the M.H.E.S. Additionally, along with Duck Hunt, we were slowing burgeoning the M.H.E.S. into the market. Witnessing this boy, I started to

reminisce about my childhood... If he truly loved games with his heart, he would eventually be able to become an amazing developer... That was how I started as well.

A minuscule crack.

The once frozen-solid American game industry was being drilled through the tiny cracks by the M.H.E.S. in a tiny toy shop in New York.

Mr. Wilson decided to take Duck Hunt to the streets where he offered passing pedestrians a trial. Subsequently, the people that were originally watching with interest started to grab the electronic gun, and they wildly began shooting at the screen. Duck Hunt was already popular with the kids, due to its intuitive gameplay, and it became even more-so now.

A nearby arcade that was hosting Super Marigee was packed with people lining up to play, and domestically in the U.S., Super Marigee already became the symbolic character for Mintendo. Kids became more familiar with Marigee than the home-made Popeye, and finally, stores were starting to order the M.H.E.S.

President Yamauchi originally planned to let the incentive program run for only two months, but I convinced him again to give the two month incentive to the first stores that ordered the M.H.E.S. In addition, I thoroughly explained the gameplay to the employees, and I made a manual that gave tips on marketing strategies as well.



The originally small leased office for the American branch office was moved to a more spacious office. On top of that, since I would be busy, even with 10 more bodies, I hired a secretary named Elise.

She didn't know a lot about games, but she was capable of exporting the items and making deals with toy stores. The concept of games was a new business for this period in the first place, so not many people knew about it; I selected her because of her concise and exact responses in the interview. I also admired the look of how she was taking notes on her notepad when we were walking around the stores to assess the situation of the market.

On one day.

After we were on the way back from inspecting the market, Elise cautiously proposed a suggestion to me.

“Supervisor Kang, I feel that delivering the items to each store and letting them handle the exhibition is causing extreme inconsistencies with the display styles; I wish there was a more unified vibe. Additionally, I think some stores are taking advantage of our incentive program too. We should directly manage the display...”

“I felt that too as the number of stores increased recently. You’ve seen the details clearly, Elise.”

“If we trained the delivery men, who stocks the store with the items, to also arrange the exhibition, it would be comfortable for us, as well as the store.”

“Then wouldn’t there be discontent among the delivery men?”

“It would probably be so.”

“Not anyone can arrange the exhibit, and, even after the initial arrangements, it has to maintained; it would be good to make a separate management team.”

Thereafter, we visited the stores that were stocking our items, and we helped design the exhibit, decorated the store itself with various game characters. Due to that, good rumors were going around the toy markets.

Of course, we did have to invest a certain amount of capital at first, but, after the rumours were spread between toy stores about the incentive program and prettily decorating the store service, our business expanded and orders started flooding in.

Once the M.H.E.S. was sent out to a new store, it would sell out in an instant, like a sponge absorbing water. A new wind was blowing in the American console market that was staggered due to the Atari shock.

Rather than sitting in an office all day answering calls, I preferred walking around in casual clothes, inspecting the market. In contrast to when I first came here, it was easy to spot a M.H.E.S. unit in almost every toy store.

All except one. There was no M.H.E.S. to be found at the biggest toy store in town, “Toy World”.

“You’re still being stubborn, are you?”

# Chapter 15 : Attacking The American Market (5)

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Toy World was a big chain store that had several big shops in other cities. As large as they were, people obviously went to them; thus, virtually every company wanted to display their items there. Was that the reason?

It was rare that Toy World would directly request toy companies to send Toy World their items. Instead, the representatives of these companies visited them with a catalog, and they requested their items to be stocked. After briefly looking around the Toy World store, I discreetly opened the store door, entering inside.

“It’s fancy...”

The interior of the store looked more luxurious than six months ago. This was almost like a scene out of ‘Toy Story’. But still, no video game corner could be found anywhere inside.

“It’s still the same...”

I bitterly moistened my mouth, and I started examining the store once again. Because it was the weekend, there were many children with their parents browsing around for toys. As I was observing the joyous faces of the children, I started feeling happy as well. At that moment, one kid shook his mother’s hands, and he asked:

“Mommy~ Where is Super Marigee and M.H.E.S?”

“I don’t know... The store is too big, so it’s hard to find it. However, it should be here somewhere in this huge store, I’ll try asking an employee.”

Huh? It must be a customer who came here to buy a M.H.E.S. My curiosity arose as I was examining a toy at the corner, so I followed the boy’s mother, maintaining my distance.

“Excuse me, are you guys selling a device that can play Super Marigee?”

The kid’s mother gave off an impression that she didn’t know much about the M.H.E.S.. In response, the store employee adjusted his glasses, and he answered with a bright expression.

“Would you follow me here?”

Mmm? From what I know, Mintendo hadn’t stocked Toy World with our devices yet. What was that employee trying to show? I turned my head sideways in confusion, and I moved my footsteps towards them. A while later, the place that the employee led them to was a small hidden corner in the store that was displaying Atari’s garbage products.

“Currently, we’re selling the console at a very low price from Atari, the biggest Game Company in America. On top of that, we’re also selling cartridges at a value of \$1 dollar each. It should be much better than the M.H.E.S. console; it is very expensive, and only a few games have been released for it.”

... Does this bastard think of the customers as a free meal? I stared at them with a weird expression. At that moment, the kid who was grabbing his mother's hands asked the employee:

"I want the M.H.E.S.; I want to play Duck Hunt and Super Marigee."

"Little kid~ Every game is pretty much the same thing. Mintendo is also a game company, so, if you wait a little, they will make a separate cartridge for Atari."

"Uh? Really?"

"Did someone say we would design Super Marigee for the failed Atari 2600 device?"

I couldn't contain myself any longer, and I approached them; the employee looked over to me with an alarmed gaze, and he murmured:

"Who... Who are you?"

I approached them, I took out a business card, and then I handed it to the kid's mother.

"Hello, I am an employee from the headquarters that's managing the M.H.E.S. console. We are not planning to produce the games

that the kid wants for Atari. It's a little far from here, but, if you walk down three blocks from here, there is a small toy store called 'Toy Box'. If you show my business card there, the owner there will kindly explain everything you need to know."

"Ah, thank you."

The kid's mother gave me a thanks, and she walked out of the store with her child. After they left, the store employee glared, starting an argument with me:

"Who the hell are you to come into our store and chase away a customer?"

"Then who the hell are you to lead on the customers and lie to them?"

"What did you say? Is this yellow monkey assaulting me?"

"Are you looking down on me because I'm Asian? Does this store treat their customers this way?"

I responded to the employee's remark with an even louder retort, and the people who were viewing the store were turning their gazes towards us. Soon after, the employee named Smith – who kicked me out of the store last time – quickly came, trying to calm us down.

"What's the matter, Jason?"

“This person interrupted my conversation with a customer, and he led them away to another store to buy their products. This is clearly a disturbance of business.”

As Mr. Smith turned his head toward me, and, when he laid his eyes upon me, his face hardened.

“You are...?”

“Hello, Mr. Smith, how have you been?”

“You’re the M.H.E.S.’s representative...?”

“Your memory is quite good; we had only met once.”

“If I recall correctly, your name was Mr. Kang?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“If you’re available, our president would like to see you again. Could you possibly make an appointment?”

Hoho...? Why should I have to meet with that person again? I briefly glanced at my wrist watch and answered Mr. Smith:

“I’m sorry to say this, but I have a meeting to attend to, so I have



to leave. I'll visit again. If it's urgent, please contact our MHES office."

'If you even have the courage to lower your head and call, that is~'

I handed Mr. Smith my business card, and I walked out of the building. After this event, there was no contact from Toy World, even after waiting a couple of days. They're probably busy scamming customers to clear out the garbage Atari products... The more they do that, the more they would lose their reputation; it looks like the Toy World president is a fool who doesn't understand the other half.

Every time I came back, after making a trip outside, a stack of documents that needed approval was placed on my desk. Most of it was about the Display Incentive Program; Elise organized the different types of documents into separate stacks, and my job – that was given to me by the headquarters – was to review and approve them. Then one day...

"Manager Kang, this is a complaint filed by a customer. Would you like to read it?"

"Mmm? From a customer?"

"Recently, there has been numerous complaints bursting out about the inconsistency in the product's pricing across different stores."

“How could that be? The stores that we’re managing are being strictly monitored by us!”

“Then the rise in prices could be due to the lack of supply?”

“Haa, selling too well has its own disadvantages.”

After letting out a long sigh, I took a look at the customer’s letter.

-To the supervisor of the MHES

-I am a mother of a child who is deeply infatuated with video games. My child is, especially, very much in love with Super Marigee. Whenever he came back from school, he would bring up games like Super Marigee, Marigee Brothers, and Duck Hunt. Then, he would beg about being able to play them with his friends.

-How many parents in the world are able to win over their children? I’m worried about his education; however, due to him wanting it so badly, I purchased the MHES at Toy World last week.

Wait a second, she bought a MHES at Toy World? What the hell is she saying? Something’s wrong here.

-As you already know, Toy World is an incredibly huge toy store that displays a variety of toys from different companies, and their reputation is high, due to many famous celebrities visiting them. However, after purchasing the MHES from there, I couldn’t help but be shocked due to its astronomical price. Even if the package

contained the electronic gun and the robot, a price of \$299 was too high.

\$299... Not \$2, or \$30; they're selling it for a whopping \$100 more!? I was speechless as I continued to carefully read the rest of the letter.

-We did buy it for our child because he wanted it so much; however, from what I know, the MHES is priced at \$199. When I asked the store clerk about this enormous price discrepancy, I couldn't receive a satisfactory answer. There were other stores nearby that were also selling the MHES, but the prices were similar to Toy World. I think there is definitely a problem here. I hope the company responsible for the MHES will investigate this matter in order to prevent the customers from being swindled.

"Ha... I'm going crazy..."

"I read this too, and I'm furious about this as well. How could the biggest toy company in the states do such a shameless act?"

"Because it makes money..."

"What?"

"First, I'll visit the Toy World store written on this letter. Elise, put a halt order to all the devices that are being prepared to ship out for now.

“M-Manager, what are you saying!?”

“I’m telling you to stop the shipments until this situation is settled.”

I quickly put on an attire, and I headed out of the office door. I hopped onto a taxi that was on standby in front of the building, and I rushed towards the Toy World store. After a while, I stood in front of a Toy World chain store, took a deep breath, and then I pulled the door open.

“Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. Welcome to Toy World! A land full of joy and wonder.”

“Welcome my ass, you conniving bastards!!!”

As soon as I stepped into the store, I cursed at the employees in Korean. The confused employee asked:

“What?”

I coughed a few times and asked a question in English.

“I’m looking for the MHES, is it being sold in this store?”

“Ah~ Of course. Come this way~”

When the store clerk found out that I knew how to speak English, he nodded his head with a satisfied expression, leading me to the counter. A moment later, the store clerk took out the MHES, from below the counter, and he asked, with a bright smile, if this was the one. As I halfheartedly nodded my head, I asked for the price. He slightly twisted his lips upwards, and he opened his mouth.

“Thank you, it is \$299.”

“... Is this bastard playing with me?”

“Excuse me?”

I took out my business card from my pocket, and I placed it on top of the table. As the store clerk was examining the card with an indifferent expression, he spotted the words MHES, blinking his eyes.

“As you can see, I’m a Mintendo employee, Kang Junhyuk. Can you please explain why you guys are selling the MHES at \$299 when we priced it at \$199?”

However, the clerk unexpectedly had an unconcerned expression.

“What does it have to do with you for how much we are selling the devices that we purchased?”

Huh? What the fuck is with this arrogant attitude when It

wouldn't even be enough, even if they went on their knees and begged for forgiveness?

# Chapter 16 : Attacking The American Game Market (6)

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I was speechless as I retorted:

“What did you say just now? You guys are selling our product for 100 bucks more than the market price, and you’re saying this has nothing to do with us?!”

“It’s not like we’re ordering the items from your company, right? The products that we’re selling are all bought from nearby stores for \$199. All we’re doing is just reselling it to the customers. Shouldn’t we, as a business, take some profit?”

“Then wouldn’t the solution have been to contact us with the product order first!!”

“You should have brought a catalog to us from the beginning and negotiated a deal.”

‘Wow~ This guy is not getting it. How does a person like this even exist?’

As the clamor got louder at the counter, a middle-aged man, who looked like a manager for the store, came towards us.

“What’s the problem?”

“This gentleman claims to be an employee for the MHES; it looks like he came over because he heard about us selling this console for \$299.”

“Yeah? Excuse me, but you’re disturbing the other customers. If you keep making a ruckus like this, then please leave the store.”

“Both the manager and the employee sold their conscious. I can’t believe this...”

“If you keep causing a disturbance here, we’ll call the cops.”

“Yes~ Alright. I’ll quietly leave for today, but I won’t let it pass like this; just wait.”

“Whatever you say~”

The manager displayed his unnaturally white teeth, and he unpleasantly grinned. As I headed out to the door, while taking turns glaring at them, I heard the sound of them mocking me.

“The monkey acting like he’ll do something when he has no guts~ Hahaha~”

‘Yeah? So this is your choice?’

I squeezed the door handle and violently pulled at it. Toy World... I swear that as long as I’m in the U.S., I’ll do everything I



can to bankrupt your entire chain...

-Grind

I was furious enough to taste the blood inside my tightly shut mouth.

“Mm!? You want to change the package design again?”

“Yes. I want to nail in a huge price tag sign in this blank space.”

In response, Mr. Yamashita looked at me with a bewildered expression.

“What are you saying!? Hey, this isn’t some kind of a kid’s snack, yet you want to embed the price on the package...”

“Is there a law that states we can’t display the price on an electronic product?”

“No... Of course there’s no law like that, but we can’t just change the package every time the market price fluctuates, can we? And...”

“And what?”

“First of all... The market is growing just like how we want it to,

and Toy World is buying up the consoles from other stores; thus, doesn't it have nothing to do with us?"

"What are you spewing right now? If this situation continues, it will surely make a negative impact on the American game market. The damage of selling the MHES for 100 dollars more will directly be born by the consumers; 100 dollars is the price of two cartridges. We're losing from this."

"Ah... right, right..."

This bastard is acting like an idiot immediately after his 'rebirth'. I've treated him kindly because he was related to Mr. Yamauchi; however, he has a mind like this? He is a big disappointment. At that moment, Elise, who was watching us from the side, asked me with a worried voice:

"What should I do with the current consoles that are getting ready to ship? The stores are constantly asking for the arrival date..."

Mr. Yamashita hurriedly nodded his head, and he opened his mouth:

"Since those products were already paid for, quickly go ahead and ship them."

"Yes, I'll..."

“Don’t ship them.”

Elise was startled by my response, and Mr. Yamashita stared at me, hugging the documents for exportation.

“Return all the money to the stores, and give them compensation money for breaching the contract as well.”

“Ka... Kang-kun!! What the hell are you saying!?”

“From now on, not a single unit of the MHES can be shipped without my permission. Elise, immediately contact the packaging supplier; I want you to request that they embed the \$199 sign in a noticeable place on the box.”

“Yes sir.”

Elise promptly nodded her head, and she headed out of the management office. Afterwards, Mr. Yamashita scratched his head, and he asked me a question.

“Kang-kun, what are you really planning? You’re seriously bent on terminating this deal with the delivery company instead of working this out!? We’ve worked so hard to get to this point!!”

“The demand is enough for our product. The current supply of the MHES that is sprinkled around the market will be gone by the end of this month.”

“And after that?”

“While our products are clearing out this month, we will establish a Mintendo membership club.”

“A membership club?”

“It will be the start of our specialized chain store to sell our products with assurance to the customers.”

This was the beginning of a strategy to isolate the humongous giant: Toy World.

The very next day, we visited the president of Toy Box, Mr. Wilson, who was the first one ever to accept our product. After hearing the before and afters of the situation, Mr. Wilson nodded in agreement to my plan.

“Yes, Toy World’s tyranny is severe, after all. They didn’t do that with just the MHES; they would also buy any popular toy, no matter what it is, and they would jack up the prices later, selling them at exorbitant prices to customers. The customers have nowhere else to purchase them, so they have no choice but to bite their tongues and purchase the toys from Toy World; however, a specialized chain store? What exactly is that??”

“We would gather cooperating individuals, such as yourself, Mr. Wilson, and we will create an exclusive club. This would allow us

to directly oversee the entire distribution and marketing process.”

“Ah~ That’s a great idea.”

“If a store becomes a member, and they gets caught supplying devices to Toy World, we would terminate all contracts with that store. The leftover devices would be distributed to other membership stores. In addition, stores will be given extra incentives based on the monthly sale rankings.”

“Then that’s all the better for us~!!”

Mr. Wilson wore a satisfied expression, after hearing my response, and he enthusiastically clapped. Doesn’t he seem a little too fervent when we haven’t even carried out the plan yet? Is he going to faint with shock after he hears the next piece of information? Elise, who went out to survey the market with me, brightly smiled, as if she was having the same thoughts as me.

“And one more thing, I want to propose a suggestion to you, Mr. Wilson.”

“Mmm? If it’s something I could do, I’ll do whatever I can to help out.”

“Please close up this shop and become the first manager of our Mintendo’s premium chain store.”

“What did you say...?”

Money plays an important role in obtaining comfort when living in this world. A building that was in front of Toy World was coincidentally empty, so making the contract was smooth sailing. After investing a tremendous amount of labor, we were able to prettily design the interior with an elegant white tone. We laced the store with attractions with various Donkey Kom and Marigee related character models that were imported from Japan.

President Yamauchi, who was initially in the toy making industry, had jumped into the character models field. Gaining support from the popularity of Super Marigee, the character models were also rapidly selling like hotcakes.

I gathered every ounce of knowledge that I knew about keychains to dolls, and I sent the request to Japan; thus, the types of items should increase more and more?

The current market was in a frenzy because the supply of the MHES was completely dried out. For the past month, I've been running around everywhere like a wandering martial arts master, and I only contacted cooperating stores. As a result, the number of affiliated stores were less in number than before; however, in exchange, every store had a high level of loyalty towards us.

“To own such a pretty store like this... this is like a dream. I'm absolutely fortunate to be able to meet Mr. Kang.”

“Your position has been relegated from a store owner to a manager, but, in exchange, the revenue should be much higher

than before.”

Mr. Yamashita stared at the premium store that was getting ready to open tomorrow, and he asked Mr. Wilson, with a gaping mouth:

“A premium store of this size, in the middle of New York... Mr. Wilson, you were incredibly rich all along...?”

“What? No~ This is all Mr. Kang’s...”

I stabbed Mr. Wilson in the waist, and I flashed a wink.

“This is all due to meeting Mr. Kang~ Hahaha~”

In actuality, this premium store was established mostly with my own money. I could’ve asked President Yamauchi to set up a store with the company funds, but it wouldn’t have been easy to squeeze money out of that miser; additionally, I thought that it would be a huge help for me in the future, owning a store in the middle of New York, so I made the decision to invest. Of course, because I was a foreigner, I set up a co-ownership with Mr. Wilson. Elise acted as the witness. These two were the most trustworthy people in America after all~[\[1\]](#)

On the opposite site of the street, the Toy World employees, and the owner, stood side by side, and stared at us with an uncomfortable air. When I intentionally smiled, brightly, extending a greeting to them first, they spat splat, going back

inside their store, a moment later.

‘Let’s have a real war, together. I’ll show you fuckers that I can play around with money, too.’

The opening of the first premium store was a moment of explosion, where every item in stock was being sold at once. Two weeks ago, before the opening, we put up a huge advertisement in the newspapers, so all of the customers would rush to our premium store. Elise and I actually had to help Mr. Wilson take on the crowd.

The stretched line was followed by the ever-increasing amount of sales, and then a familiar face of a man was staring back at me, with a smirk. It was an employee of Toy World from across the street, Mr. Smith. Behind him was Jason, who had tried to scam the customers. I momentarily felt a flare of anger rising up, but I tried to smile the best I could, opening my mouth:

“Hello, are you here to purchase the MHES?”

“Yes. I want to order 100 units of the MHES.”

“Ah~ 100 units? Don’t you see this sign, esteemed customer?”

I pointed at the small notice sign, with my chin. On the sign was written:

-To make our MHES available for a wider audience, customers



are limited to two units only. We ask for your understanding.

“Just now... So you’re saying you won’t sell the item?”

“Not at all~ We’re selling, but it’s limited to two units per person. For all I know, Mr. Smith could also be a fan of Nintendo, so how could I not sell it to you?”[\[2\]](#)

“Kukk... Just give me two units for now. I’ll come back later...”

“Since it’s two sales per day, you’d be coming back every day~ Thank you very much.”

I placed the MHES, from the stack behind the counter, on top of the counter, and I continued talking with a bright tone.

“This will be \$398. Thank you, customer.”

However, after seeing the package, Mr. Smith had no thoughts of handing the money over; he was staring intently at the box.

“What the hell... is this? When was a label like this on the box?”

-The MHES is \$199. If you bought this for more than that, then you were scammed. If there is a store like that, then please report it to the address below. We will compensate for the difference, as soon as possible, and we will take measures against the seller. Our Nintendo is on the customer’s side-

Below the notice was a huge text labeled \$199. I tilted my head to the side, and I asked Mr. Smith:

“Excuse me, customer? Are you going to buy it? People are waiting behind you...”

“You damned monkey fucker!!”

“If you’re not going to buy it, piss off, you hospitalized retard.”

Korean cursing is truly miraculous. Should I describe it as being able to anger the opponent without swearing?

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Notes:

[\[1\]](#) Remember the enormous amount that Kang-kun received from playing the Game & Watch?

[\[2\]](#) Kang-kun is referring to Mr. Smith in 3rd person while directly speaking to him

# Chapter 17 : Attacking The American Market (7)

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In the end, Smith and Jason had no choice but to give up on purchasing the MHES, going back.

After a while.

The consumers of America eventually stood up together against Toy World. Due to the effect of our targeted advertisements, the indignant buyers came together, filing a class action lawsuit; they also started a boycott against Toy World.

I also originally considered suing Toy World as an alternative, but I thought that taking action against a reputable conglomerate like Toy World would negatively impact our newly-started Mintendo; thus, I left them alone.

Instead, my idea of putting the price tag and notice on the package – to inform the buyers – was perfectly executed as planned, and the seemingly infallible Toy World's reputation hit rock bottom with the power of the American citizens. That's what you get, you idiots~

Four months passed by just like that.

Thanks to the ever-increasing membership sign-ups from the specialty stores, I didn't even have the time to eat lunch. I was sitting, late, in the office, making do with McDonuld's

hamburgers.

-Riiinnng~~

At that time, Elise, who was getting ready to leave, picked up the call, and she subsequently asked me a question:

“Excuse me, Manager Kang; the president of Toy World just called.”

“Mmm?? Just a second.”

It finally came. Granted, the console that he kicked out on his own accord was making a tremendous hit across America for the past year; how could he not bear to stock the console? It was surprising that he even lasted this long. I washed down the hamburger I was chewing with a mouthful of Coca-cola and picked up the phone.

“Yes, this is MHES’s Kang Junhyuk.”

“Mr. Kang? Do you remember me perhaps?”

It was a familiar voice, but I pretended not to know, retorting:

“Who is this? I wouldn’t know who you are if you ask like that.”

“I’m the president of America’s biggest toy store, ‘Toy World’, that has the largest number of stores, Tom Wilson.”

“Ah~ Hello, President Tom. It’s been awhile. How can I help you?”

“Ah, actually that is...”

President Tom seemed to be very uncomfortable with lowering himself and asking me like this, muttered around. I, who was already feeling unhappy from getting disrupted, while eating, let out a small sigh:

“I don’t exactly know what you’re trying to say, but I have to leave soon to another store for a contract. If it’s nothing serious, I’ll hang up.”

“Hey, wait!! Stop!!! The thing is, the contract...”

“Ah~ Is Toy World finally taking in our products!? This is really great! It’s a great honor to have the biggest toy store in New York contacting us like this on their own initiative.”

“Hum~ Hum~ Thank you for recognizing us.”

‘Hoh? I lifted him up a little, and look at this?’

President Tom coughed a bit, and he voiced his request:

“We want to order around 300 units, so at what day would the order come in?”

“Ah~ 300 units? I’m sorry, but our minimum exportation starts at 500 units. Also, it looks like you don’t know this, but only our specialty store can export the products; you’d have to register to be a member.”

“Look here, Mr. Kang. You’re really trying to get me to sign up for this Mintendo membership bullshit, now? Do you not know how many chain stores Toy World has across America?”

“I know that, and I also know you had to payout quite a huge sum to the class action lawsuit four months ago. Your current business is a bit unstable, isn’t it?”

“Kurghh...”

“First of all, this is a rule that we’ve set up in accordance with other businesses, so the sign-up is a must. So, do you want to sign up as a member and order 500 units?”

“Alright... Then I’ll do that, and i’ll take in the 500 units. If I order now, what day would it come in on?”

‘Hoh? Now he’s giving me an order?’

In English, there was no definite barrier between honorifics and casual talking, but words that gave respect to others definitely existed. However, this President Tom's word choice was that of issuing a command to his subordinates.

“Hmm... I'm sorry Mr. President. I think you'd have to wait for quite a while, an influx of orders are coming in from the other stores. You'd have to wait at least three more months?”

“What... Three months... the Christmas season would have passed by then!!!”

“That's right... It's a shame, but we're a company that places importance on trust; no matter how small the store is, we're diligently keeping all our promises. I'm very sorry for not being able to ship our products to the biggest toy store in New York, Toy World, in time for the Christmas season.”

‘Hah~ So it'll be Christmas season one month from now.’

It has almost been one year since I arrived at this place. Mintendo's family consoles have been selling like hot cakes, and it has nearly dominated the Japanese and American market.

NEGA was late to realize the game industry had not died out yet. They announced their new device, along with the NEGA disk, but the entirety of the game market was being swept by the family console; thus, there was no need to worry.

“Umm... Mr. Kang, I’m really sorry, but is there no possibility of contacting your headquarters to add additional orders? I’m asking you...”

“Hmmm... Mr. Wilson, I’m sorry to say this, but, now that I look at the membership regulations, it says we can’t ship our MHES to any stores that scammed our customers.”

“Wh-what did you say...?”

“I’m sorry again, but it’s not like we signed a contract; let’s just pretend this conversation never happened? Sorry for complicating things. Please contact us again after the reputation of Toy World recovers~ Then.”

“W-wait!!”

In response, Mr. Wilson seemed like he had something to say with his trembling voice, but I slammed the receiver down.

‘Are you crazy? My frustration reached its peak because of you guys, and you expect me to hand over our products? After a few words of apology? There’s no need to ship our products to a business with a rock-bottom reputation that’s about to go under water.’

“You’re amazing, Manager. The breath of Toy World is still somewhat prevalent throughout the industry, and you firmly cut them off...”



“They say a rich person can eat and live for three years after going bankrupt. They might save themselves somehow, but let’s hope the American citizens aren’t as stupid as that~”

“This is my first time seeing person as scary as you, Manager. The branch office president would’ve let the past go and sent our products to them for more profit, but Manager isn’t like that. Even though you’re Asian, just like the branch office president, is this the difference between Korean and Japanese people?”

The blonde haired beauty, Secretary Elise, said that to me as she stared at me with a perplexed expression. The branch office of Mintendo and the MHES accomplished the feat of sweeping the American market in less than a year. Thanks to that, the company expanded, and I was promoted to vice-president, along with Secretary Elise, who took on the role of managing the specialty stores.

“Miss Elise.”

“Yes, Manager.”

“You’ve suffered a lot while following me around for the past six months, right?”

“Can you even call that a question? I’ve never seen anyone as unpredictable as you, Manager.”

“Haha~ That’s a compliment, right?”

“Mmm~ About half of it? Hoho.”

“You’ve seen how I work closer than anyone, so you should be able to continue in my absence.”

“Yes~ Of course.”

“Then, Miss Elise; please take my position and be the vice-president, starting next year.”

“What...? What did you say!?”

“I think I’ll have to go back to Japan, again. The release date of NEGA’s new device is approaching soon.”

“Manager, what are you saying right now?! You’re saying you’ll have to return to Japan? Then what about the American branch?”

“With you here, I can leave with my heart at ease.”

“Manager!!! You can’t! You absolutely can’t!!!”

‘What’s there to refuse? I’ve suffered through eating the greasy hamburgers and working my bum off, and there are a plethora of tasks that need to be done in Japan~!!’

“Kang-kun. So... Are you really leaving?”

“Haha~ I didn’t know my business trip would be extended this long. When I first came here, I thought I’d be staying for around a month; however, to think that I’d be leaving after spending Christmas here.”

On the road to the airport, Mr. Yamashita sighed with reluctance, and he grabbed my hands.

“We came this far thanks to you Kang-kun, so I’m just unwilling to let you go...”

“The system is solidly laid out, so there won’t be any problems in the U.S.. Send my regards to Mr. Wilson, and tell him that I’m sorry for leaving without saying good bye...”

“Mr. Wilson would be very upset.”

“Right? Haha~ Well, this won’t be the last time we meet; I’ll come visit again some time.”

“Yeah, let’s frequently keep in touch.”

As I arrived at the airport, I heard a familiar voice.

“Manager~!! Manager!!!”

“Miss Elise?”

“You wicked cunt!! How could you leave like this without saying a word!!!”

‘Ho...? What did she say to me just now?’

“Miss Elise, are you hurt somewhere?”

“Do you know how much I love you?!! What do you want me to do by myself after you leave me with this promotion, fleeing to Japan!!”

Her makeup was ruined because of her tears; she approached me, and she started punching me in the chest. After tanking her punches for awhile, I grabbed her hands, pushing my lips onto hers.

“Heup!!”

“Uh, mmm... Hey Kang-kun...? Huh huh...”

Mr. Yamashita turned his gaze away as he scratched his cheeks. After finishing that electrifying kiss with Elise, I wrapped my hands around her cheeks, saying:

“Stay healthy, Elise~ If you receive a vacation, come to Japan. I’ll

treat you to a delicious dinner~”

“Good bye, Manager Kang...”

I concluded my final farewell, and I headed towards the departure area. Subsequently, the Americans near us clapped, and they whistled; I hurried my embarrassed self onto the runway entrance.

‘Ah~ This is really. It’s great to have a passionate kiss with a blonde beauty~! It was worth it to come to America~!!’

The year 1985. This period was a very unique period amongst the history of games. It was originally the year of the release of Super Marigee.

Since I pushed the release ahead of schedule, some of the suspense was taken away. The event that shined the most was the evolution of RPG games.

1985 was the year that burgeoned the “then-commonly called” TRPG -, a game played on tabletops, by rolling dice – into the fully-fledged RPG, exploring fantasy worlds.

“Welcome back, Kang-kun~!!”

“My man, you look more chiseled after drinking that American juice!”

Mintendo, the company that I belonged to. It had grown in size, along with the exploding popularity of the Family console; they came out of their image as a toy company, and the company became known as a true game company. The company size had grown even larger, and new buildings were built in place.

“Wow... The company grew so large?”

“Right? It’s all due to us working hard together.”

Mr. Gunpei had a satisfied smile while he was admiring the Mintendo headquarters. Then, the voice of a robust old man was heard.

“This is all thanks to my eye in gathering geniuses, you bastards~!!”

“Ah~ President Yamauchi. How have you been?.”

“You, you bastard. You should’ve reported to me as soon as you arrived at the company, and now you’re making this ruckus here? From what I heard, you’ve been paying rent at an ultra-luxurious hotel and living there all along!!”[\[1\]](#)

“President, wasn’t that paid for with my personal cash?”

“Woah hoh, look at this man? Your way of talking is still the

same.”

“Haha, is that right? Anyways, I’m glad to see you looking healthy.”

“Bastard~ I’m not dead yet, alright? I’ll be the president until the year 2000~!!”

‘That’s right. You were the president until 2002.’

At that moment, Mr. Gunpei lifted up his glasses up and prophesied to the president with a serious expression:

“Excuse me, President Yamauchi; according to Nostradamus’s prophecy, the Earth will end in the year 1999...”

“Hey~ you crazy bastard!! Is that the thing to say to me right now!!?”

Mmm... The teddy bear’s sense is a bit lacking after all~

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Notes:

[\[1\]](#) This is just a friendly banter from Yamauchi, don’t know if the translation gave off the same feeling x.x but just keep that in mind

# Chapter 18 : Sponsor Game (1)

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“So, did you choose a department you want to be in?”

“Yes, I want to go to the next-generation console inventions department.”

President Yamauchi tilted his head sideways and asked Mr. Gunpei:

“Was there a department like that in our company?”

“Ah, I’m currently the director of the department in charge of overseeing the development of the Game Boy; does Kang-kun mean you want to work under me?”

“No. I’m talking about the department that will invent the next generation of consoles that will follow the Family line.”

In response, President Yamauchi retorted with a strange expression on his face:

“Mn!? The successor to Family? I’ve never thought of that before? The Family console is doing great at the moment; don’t you think it’s a bit early to make the next model already?”

“Of course, I don’t mean we should make it right away, but a competitor called NEGA showed up, and they will emphasize their



sturdy hardware as their selling point when they release their disks. I think you should slowly start thinking about this. As time goes on, the standard of technology will also be raised higher and higher. When that time comes, Mintendo's Family will amount to nothing more than a brief moment of glory."

"Hmm... The next model... What you're saying is right, Kang-kun. The game quality will only increase if we develop powerful hardware to match the era..."

"That's right, President. So, I want to request to make a new department. I will focus on developing the 2nd generation console as well as developing games alongside it."

"What are your thoughts, Gunpei?"

"I also agree with Kang-kun. We are currently holding the #1 spot in this industry, but companies that recognized the gaming industry as a potential gold mine are springing up all over the place. To set ourselves apart from them, I don't think it's a bad idea."

"Alright. Then we will proceed with that plan."

"Yes. Thank you."

'Huh? That went easier than I imagined. That greedy miser Yamauchi immediately gave his permission??? My success in the attack of the American market must have given rise to my position

within the company.'

Thanks to that, I started my new job in Japan as the director of the new inventions department. This was the year 1985, and my age was 23 years old.

&

"Mr. Shige, have you tried out the new Dragon Warrior game yet?"

Mr. Shige was the nickname given to Kumamoto Shigeru. In the recent times, he was putting all of his effort in developing one game.

"Don't know, bastard."

His monotone voice reflected his thorny mental state. As a result, the employee who asked the question backed off with a jittery face. I was watching Mr. Shige with one hand in my pocket while drinking coffee. If anyone saw my body position, they would've cursed me for being rude; but I had pioneered the great spark in the American market and also held the position of the director of the inventions department, so there was no one that could say something to me.

"Oii? You bastard, you're not taking your hands out of your pocket? Your body position changed to that of a gangster after gorging yourself with the American juice? Mr. Kang?"

“Ah, President, how are you?”

“I’m not ‘How are you’, you bastard.”

“Haha, what’s the occasion for coming to the inventions office?”

“I came here to check up on Shige.”

However, Mr. Shigeru didn’t acknowledge President Yamauchi’s presence at all, and continued to stare intently at the monitor. President Yamauchi smiled and had an amused expression towards Mr. Shigeru, and he asked:

“Hey, Shige. Did you also try that Dragon Warrior or whatever it was called?”

In response, Mr. Shigeru’s eyebrows twitched and trembled before he finally slammed the desk and stood up.

“I don’t know you bastard!! Why are you asking me about Dragon Warrior and whatnot!!”

“ ... ”

President Yamauchi gave an impression of a goldfish, and blinked his lips up and down.

“Really... After seating young people as the director of a department, the entire company is going mad...”

“Ah, President!?”

“No matter how free-minded I am, I’ve treated you too kindly recently, right?”

“Ah, I was thinking of something else and...”

Mr. Shigeru was furiously apologizing to the president with a panicked expression. It was said that jealousy will drive a person mad, and now the game ‘Dragon Warrior’ was driving Mr. Shigeru insane. I looked outside the window while sipping my coffee.

Recently, I discovered an interesting piece of truth. It was that the history of the game industry was skewed. From what I knew, according to the original sequence of events, Mr. Shigeru’s ‘Legend of Karin’ should’ve come out about three months before ‘Dragon Warrior’, but to think that Dragon Warrior would be released this quickly...

Due to the Side Scrolling technology – along with Super Marigee – being introduced one year earlier in this world, the genres in the game industry were greatly expanded. From that, the making of Dragon Warrior was finished within five months, and the first of its series was released like that.

The release day of Dragon Warrior. I also went by train and visited Akihabara, Tokyo. Because of the success of the Family and the effects of NEGA's disk, the current Akihabara was a haven of electronic products and gaming devices. The Dragon Warrior game, that was made for the Family by the Japanese company Phoenix, had already gathered the attention of gamers before its release and enjoyed a conflagration of popularity on its release date.

Up until now, games were generally made in accordance with the 'arcade' genre, but the unique Side Scrolling technology introduced by Super Marigee expanded the realm of the genre of games. However, strictly speaking, Super Marigee, which had some elements of arcade action, was not a completely new genre altogether.

However, Dragon Warrior, at the time of its release, took the name of the first RPG game in Japan and was drawing in swathes of popularity. In actuality, Mr. Shigeru was also developing a game at the same time, which had a theme of a fairy clad in a green hat, in hopes of taking Japan's first RPG title, but the problem was his own greed that led to a downward spiral.

As a result of adding in too many details to the storyline, the development period was extended. At first, it was a simple plot about a boy from the elf race adventuring to save the princess, but Shigeru added in various details, such as making an emblem made of three triangles that came together to form a 'triforce', and started his world by building on top of that.

Naturally, the development period was stretched from three

months to six... and from six months to nine, and on and on... During that time, Phoenix completed an adventure story-like game about a warrior saving the princess, and that was 'Dragon Warrior'.

&

“Urghh... Ah, this is annoying...”

I asked Mr. Shigeru a question while handing him a coffee inside the resting room.

“Are you okay? Mr. Shige? What’s there to stress about~ You can keep developing your game at the steady pace you’ve been going at so far.”

“Ah~ Thank you. That’s what I’m saying. That’s what I want to do, but the more attention Dragon Warrior is getting, the more worried I become. The first of the RPG genre~!! I was jealous of that title...”

“Your greed is a little too much. Thanks to Dragon Warrior, other game making companies are in a frenzy right now. Tons of new company that either made Family or NEGA specific disks have popped up instead of the traditional arcade companies.”

“Now that Dragon Warrior is making a tremendous hit, many similar RPG games should pop up as well? Ah~ Then my Legend of Karin would be buried with the store~~!!!”

The ‘Legend of Karin’ was the current title that Mr. Shige was in the process of developing right now. The main character’s name was a guy called Elk, and after referencing the kidnapped princess in the title of the game, Mr. Shige, who was giving a riddle to the players even from the title, revealed his playful nature.

I grinned at his outburst and threw out a comment.

“Then try making a new beginning within the game.”

“Mmm? What do you mean by that?”

“For example, it’s an RPG, but something like how Super Marigee faces off against enemies in the middle of a field... If you had to assign a genre to it, it would be an action RPG? Wouldn’t something like that instantly stand out?”

“Excellent!! Kang-kun!! That’s really amazing!! Just my style!! You’re an undisputable genius!!”

‘Ah, yes... Thank you.’

Mr. Shigeru instantly emptied the canned coffee and sprinted towards the invention office. Phew~ His head must be spinning with ideas.

I, who was left alone in the resting room, fell into a brief thought

while drinking coffee. Well, either Dragon Warrior or The Legend of Karin would draw the most popularity in the game history of Japan, so there's probably nothing to worry about?

&

As predicted, after the release of Dragon Warrior, the storm of RPGs started to sweep Japan. RPG games were different from basic action games in that, it took players along an incredible journey, so it was a genre that was enjoyed by adults and children alike. Because of that, the sales of the Family console grew even more and as a result, NEGA's disk had no room to step its foot into the market.

They marketed their device as the revolutionary high-end device of the era, but virtually every single game company was investing in the Family, and NEGA's disks were barely scraping by with their pitiful number of games.

“Wahahaha. As expected, something like NEGA isn't able to even reach the footsteps of our Mintendo.”

President Yamauchi's recent confidence levels reached a new height as he satisfyingly smiled as he looked at the stocks. Subsequently, Mr. Gunpei laughed as well and started to curry favor with President Yamauchi.

“Dragon Warrior is currently the #1 game, even amongst students. Thanks to that, the somewhat staggering Family sales have exploded once again.”



Devices were a very peculiar thing. Bluntly speaking, the consoles of this period were just a scrap of machine that couldn't do anything by itself. It couldn't even download games from the internet like I could back when I lived in 2015; the sales of the console were directly sold off with some games as a package, and that was directly linked to the royalty revenues that Nintendo would be receiving.

“The reporter from Game Magazine that reviewed Shigeru's ‘The Legend of Karin’ spared no compliments and guaranteed to write a great article, I'm eagerly anticipating it.”

“Shige, that bastard would do well for us again this time around, but a game magazine... Did a book like that recently spring up?”

“Yes, it'd be good to use that as a marketing tool for whatever news or new releases in the gaming industry. It seems like the magazine is popular among students as well.”

This period was also called the era of analog, where the internet didn't exist, so information could only be spread through magazines and newspapers. I also had the nostalgia of eagerly waiting as a child for the monthly edition of the game magazine.

“Then what do you think about trying out a new marketing strategy through that magazine company?”

“Mmm? Kang-kun, do you have any brilliant ideas?”

As I opened my mouth, the president and Mr. Gunpei both flashed their eyes and stared at me. Mr. Yamauchi gave off the feeling that he was eagerly anticipating the next words that would flow out of my mouth again.

“Just at the right time, a magazine called FamiTong is being released one week after the production of ‘The Legend of Karin’ cartridges.”

“Oh~ So Kang-kun knew about that magazine too. So...?”

“This Legend of Karin is a title with big expectations from our Nintendo, so what do you think about using the ‘premium strategy’?”

“Premium strategy? It’s basically the same game after it’s put into the console? Is there a need to discriminate?”

“For example, painting the package of the first 500 cartridges in gold...”

Mr. Gunpei was the first to exclaim in excitement and answered:

“Ah!! So you want to change the color of the cartridge?”

“We’re giving a rarity value to the same game. If we show that FamiTong reporter the actual item, he would write an article for

us. And from that, we would be amplifying the player's anticipation."

"It's the same game, but you're introducing a special color for the first few cartridges. That's a good idea. President?"

"It's not bad, but isn't 500 units too little? It should at least be 1,000 units to..."

"No, this amount is perfect. You just wait~"

This was the beginning of the 'limited edition' marketing strategy that would rob the gamer's pockets all the way to 2015.

## Chapter 19 : Sponsor Game (2)

---

The morning of the release of The Legend of Karin, December 17th, 1985. Mr. Shigeru and I arrived in Akihabara, Tokyo. President Yamauchi and Mr. Gunpei said they would come after browsing around the event, so they should be on their way now... To my side was Mr. Shigeru, who was continuously yawning due to the lack of sleep.

“Kang-kun. I hope everything goes as planned. We’ve prepared for the past several days for the release, but I always find it difficult to sleep the night before.”

“The public’s reception of the article about The Legend of Karin from the FamiTong Magazine seemed to be well received two months ago. Should we go?”

As I smiled and moved my footsteps, Mr. Shigeru followed closely behind me with a slightly worried expression. We purposefully planned for Saturday to be the release date. We came out of the subway, and then we headed to the place of the event.

“Why is it so empty even though it’s a Saturday? Shouldn’t it be bustling with people?”

“Mr. Shige... It’s 7 AM on a Saturday. Why would people be out this early?”

“Ah, is that right? That must be the case then, right? Haha~”

This man had completely let go of his rope of consciousness. I stared at Mr. Shige for awhile with a scrunched up expression before I turned my footsteps towards the event.

It has been a long time since I've visited Akihabara again. Specialty game stores were slowly popping up. The place that we were heading to was, of course, the largest gaming specialty store in Akihabara. Owing to the quality of games like Super Marigee and Dragon Warriors, the game industry was flourishing to the point that there were no traces of the Atari Shock to be found.

I proudly grinned as if I was feeling the movements of a baby inside the womb and was busily looking around.<sup>[1]</sup> Time passed by just like that... By the time I nearly arrived at the place of the event, I was met with a strange scene. 9 AM on Saturday. A street that should've been almost devoid of any human presence was accommodated by a number of young men sitting on the street.

If it was Shinjuku city's Kabukicho or Shibuya, the scene would've been more understandable; however, these people, who were sitting in the middle of the streets, came together, and they were discussing something.

“Do you think we could even receive a copy? The release quantity is only 500 units...”

“Idi~ot. Would Mintendo release all 500 units in one store? They probably distributed it throughout the nation. However, since this is the place of the release, I think at least 200 units would come in.

We have no chance of acquiring one for ourselves; that's why I told you guys we should've got here yesterday night!!”

“You thought I could predict this many people would show up on the release of a game?!”

‘What was that? A quantity of 500 units? Then were they here to buy The Legend of Karin? Then why are they here, so far away from the opening store?’

After Mr. Shigeru and I passed the murmuring group of guys and stepped into the alleyway that lead to the opening store, we were frozen on the spot.

“Ka-Kang-kun? I’m not dreaming, right?”

“You’re probably thinking the same thing as me.”

It’s a jackpot! The line of people, that didn’t seem to have an end, stretched all the way from the opening store. No matter how Japanese people liked to stand in line, to think that it was to this extent!!! The sale of The Legend of Karin starts at 2 PM!!

“Ka-Kang-kun. I’m having trouble breathing. Help me stand up.”

“Keep yourself together and quickly come with me. The store employees should be waiting for you, Mr. Shige.”

As we went past the ever-so-long line, I stopped before walking into the store. I asked the first person in line, who also looked to be my age.

“Thank you for coming here on this cold day. I’m an employee of Mintendo, Kang Junhyuk. May I ask how long you’ve been waiting for?”

“Haha... I’ve been waiting since 10 AM yesterday. After reading the article on the FamiTong magazine, I wanted the limited edition of this ‘The Legend of Karin’ so badly that...”

‘Oh my god, he waited for 24 hours in the freezing December chill!? This is simply madness...’

“We thank you for your enthusiasm. I’ll put in a word for our president, so, if it’s okay with you, I’d like to take a commemoration picture of you.”

“Ah, of course~!! Is the gentleman next to you Mr. Kumamoto Shigeru!? I’ve been a huge fan of yours ever since Donkey Kom. I’m highly anticipating The Legend of Karin today as well!!”

In response, Mr. Shige awkwardly smiled, and he responded:

“Thank you very much. I also hope the Legend of Karin suits your tastes.”

As time passed by, the line grew longer and longer. Finally, in the

afternoon, all hell broke loose in front of the store. It was a goosebump inducing moment. To think that all these people were here to purchase The Legend of Karin.

This situation even reached the ears of the news station, so a field reporter came out and was currently interviewing Mr. Shige.

After I placed a number of event organizers in several locations as a picket to control the chaos in front of the store, I returned to find that President Yamauchi and Mr. Gunpei had just arrived.

“Hey, you bastard~!! Director Kang!!”

President Yamauchi had his mouth stretched to his ears. He danced merrily as he ran over to me.

“What’s happening right now? Hmm?! I just got the notice a moment ago; the sales for The Legend of Karin from Osaka, Kyoto, and even Hukou were not a joke. If it continues like this, our initial stock of 30,000 would be swept away in a single day!!”

Ha~ I was somewhat expecting this outcome to a certain extent, but this was leaping past the wildest of my imaginations?! For example, the initial stock for a new title would be set to around 5,000 units.

For the market to swallow that entire amount, it would take around one week. However, as we at Mintendo had somewhat of a high expectation for the title, The Legend of Karin, we



implemented an aggressive marketing strategy by displaying the golden cartridges as the figurehead.

One of the main factors of this success was Kumamoto Shigeru. He became a star of the game industry due to his Super Marigee, Donkey Kom, etc... As a result, the interest of the gamers were perked. The FamiTong also became the first magazine to report on the trends of games; published a fancy article on this event to increase the sales.

That was how The Legend of Karin had garnered a lot of attention before its release date. Due to these factors, we experienced an incredible rebound effect from taking advantage of the slight dip in sales of Dragon Warrior.

Then, the awaited 2 PM came around the corner...

The opening store blared the theme song of The Legend of Karin, and people took turns to in purchasing the games. 150 units of the golden cartridge, that was prepared by the opening store, was cleared out in less than 15 minutes.

Of course, we had put up the notice before the release; there was no big chaos, but there were many who became depressed. President Yamauchi, who was looking at the cash register, was also making a depressed face along with the customers.

“Look at this. That’s why I told you we should’ve prepared around 10,000 units.”

“No, we wouldn’t have achieved the same effect even if we prepared 10,000 units. A limited edition cartridge means that the worth would be higher; it would be more recognized. A lower number of circulating limited edition cartridges would result in even more people.”

“Kang-kun... Are you some kind of superhuman genius? I thought you were a hardware engineer for consoles at first, but you make games. You even started a business when you were in America. Plus, on top of that, you’re doing marketing as well. Ah, and I heard that Gunpei is going to be announcing something here? What the hell is the secret that you planned with Gunpei? Was it so important that you have to keep it a secret from me, your President?”

President Yamauchi asked me with an expression that was going crazy with curiosity. However, I had no choice but to shrug my shoulders, and I pretend that I didn’t know. Actually, this secret was one of the joint projects between Mr. Gunpei, Mr. Shigeru, and I, who had expected a certain number of people to gather for the release of The Legend of Karin.

“We will announce it one hour later, so please wait a little more~”

I checked the time with my wrist watch, and I flashed a smile. If you looked around, there were notices all over the place of the event said ‘A special announcement will start at 3:33 PM.’

Speculations from the buyers were circulating about how the number ‘3’ was related to the three crystals that showed up in The

Legend of Karin, and that a sequel to the title might be released very quickly.

The buyers that had already bought a copy of The Legend of Karin were hesitant to leave the store because of their curiosity about the 3:33 PM announcement. It was a relief that we reserved a large place for this event...

To the customers that had waited for 28 hours, and that also included the very first customer. We gifted him a copy of a title with Mr. Shigeru's signature as well as small souvenirs like Marigee dolls, etc... Then, we finished taking the commemoration picture.

And now, the awaited 3:33 PM.

Mr. Gunpei, who was at the event moments ago, melted off to somewhere, and the lights dimmed inside the store; a spotlight was directed towards a small stage that was prepared beforehand.

“Huh? What is that!?”

The customers who were buying the games murmured, and they turned their gaze towards the stage as Mr. Gunpei stepped on and grabbed the mike.

“Hmm... First, we would like to thank all of you who came here to purchase our The Legend of Karin. Along with that, I'm here to announce the birth of a new mobile device.”

In response to Mr. Gunpei's announcement, the crowd immediately flared up into a clamor. A player in front of Mr. Gunpei shouted out.

"A mobile device? Are you announcing a new Game & Watch model?"

"Oh~ You have a great perception? That's exactly right."

Mr. Gunpei took out the jade-green Game & Watch from inside the pocket of his suit. It was precisely a device with The Legend of Karin as its theme. President Yamauchi, who was watching beside me, spoke:

"What? That device is the one I approved. How is this a world-shocking news for me? Of course, it seems to be shocking news for the people here. The reception isn't bad~"

"Heh, just wait a little more."

I gave off a mysterious smile and looked at the stage again. On top of the stage, Mr. Gunpei was opening up the Game & Watch, and he was explaining it to the players. Because this was a period with no projectors, he let the people in the front touch and experience the device. before explaining that the FamiTong magazine would be publishing a specific article on it tomorrow, he took the Game & Watch back.

And then...

“I have one more shocking announcement to make.”

Mr. Gunpei took out a bulky device out of his pocket, with an enigmatic smile, and he shouted:

“This is the first mobile device that implements the cartridge system: the GAMBOY.”

“WooWeaahohwoah!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“This is just a prototype model in the process of development. Although it’s a mobile device, there is an insertable cartridge slot on the back of the device. This is so you can enjoy a countless number of games with this one device. In addition, it features both speakers and headphones, so you can enjoy the gameplay and listen to the music by plugging in earphones, in a public setting, without disturbing others.

“WooWeaahoh!!!!!!!!!!”

“It has a black and white display, but the graphics are displayed in an organic and unique way. I will demonstrate it playing a game by inserting this cartridge.”

Mr. Gunpei inserted the pre-made demo-purpose cartridge into the device, and he showed it to one boy standing in the front.

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Notes:

[1] MC made the analogy of being happy to the fetal movement of a baby because there is a big culture in Korea from parents about testing the 'vigorousness' of a baby from its movement inside the womb lol

## Chapter 20 : Sponsor Game (3)

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“Super Marigee!!! That’s Super Marigee!!”

As the young boy shouted in exclamation after seeing the movements of Super Marigee on the small black and white screen, the surrounding people also shouted in excitement after looking at the screen.

“I-It is! That really is Super Marigee!!”

The people in the back weren’t able to clearly see it, but they clamored to catch a glimpse after watching the reactions of the people at the front.

Mr. Gunpei looked at the crowd with a proud smile and put the GamBoy back into his pocket.

“You’ll be able to find more information about this GamBoy, that’s in development, soon. Our current goal is to release it by the end of next year. This ends our Mintendo’s surprise announcement.”

“WOOWAAAAAAHHHHH!!!!!!!”

The announcement was a huge success. As the crowd was leaving the event, they couldn’t get rid of their shock and kept on muttering “the bomb” with a befuddled expression. There was also a gentleman who couldn’t shake off his shock and ran to the

backstage while screaming.

“Waaaannnnng~ Gunpei you cute bastard~!! Where are you!!”

It seems like the most touched person was President Yamauchi.

The Legend of Karin created a huge sensation like I had predicted.

The phenomenon at the event was reported in the news, and even a documentary was made about it under the topic of ‘The Social Influences of Gaming’. Of course, at the center of it all was Mintendo; the Family that was released on July 15th, 1983, garnered over 70 million sales in the past three years, which set the precedent for Mintendo to lay a steady foundation in the game industry.

Was that the reason why? Due to nearly every single game company making games for Mintendo’s Family, there was no way the current inventions department could check the quality standard for every single game. Therefore, President Yamauchi created the Quality Inspections Department in the February of 1986.

During the past three years that I’ve went back and forth between America and Japan, I also took on the role as both a game inventor and a representative businessman of Mintendo. My official position was a director of the next generation invention department, but I recently had more jobs outside of my position.



“Director Kang, where are you going now?”

“Ah, I’m heading outside; I’ll be back~”

As I always used honorifics towards the employees under me, I was quite popular outside of my department as well. This was a completely different side of me from the me of 2015 where I was stuck in the game development department and only making games.

Should I say I finally realized the relationship between people? I still couldn’t forget the awkward atmosphere when I was relegated to the customer service department in 2015.

‘That shouldn’t ever happen again. I’ll try to make as many people be on my side as possible, and raise my reputation both inside and outside of the company. I’m working under President Yamauchi right now, but I should prepare for the day that I would have to stand up for myself to fight for myself.’

I started rolling down the streets with my newly bought Toyota. A little while later, I arrived in front of a building of a game company in Osaka. This company, which was fairly huge, was Fox Soft, who primarily made arcade games.

Just last month, a shooting game that was developed here was receiving exceptional feedback. The name of that game was “TwinD”, which I also played with my friends when I was a child... TwinD had a very unique atmosphere to it, and that was what set it apart from other shooting games.

After the Side Scrolling technology was introduced to the world, it started to rapidly diffuse at top speed to other games as well. Should I say the shooting genre received the most benefits? The shooting games used a slightly modified version of Side Scrolling to control planes. Using a background that was displayed vertically instead of left to right, it presented a refreshing gameplay that required you to dodge the incoming enemy bullets and fly around freely in the air.

For that reason, many people thought of the year 1985 for shooting games. TwinD especially captured the gamers with a unique approach; instead of a mindless slaughtering game, the plot took place in a fantasy world. In addition, it was possible for two players to work together to defeat the enemies together, but the problem was that there were various spots on the map where friendly fire was possible.

The items that powered up the missiles were also distinguished between 1P and 2P. Players had to collect their own resources; they could shoot a missile to block the other player from getting the item.

It was busy enough trying to fight the enemy, but now that trolling allies were a thing, after a few plays, there were a number of cases that ended in real life fights. Now that I think about it, was this the start of PK?

“I fought a lot with my friend because of this game too...”

I wore a sorrowful smile on my face and headed to the Fox Soft lobby. Due to Fox Soft being a professional game company before the release of TwinD, it was a pretty big company considering it was currently the 80s.

The reason that I came here today was to assist the developers in Fox Soft's Family software development team, and as I had nothing to do at Mintendo, I came here on Mr. Shige's request.

"Hello. I'm Kang Junhyuk from Mintendo. I came here for an appointment, for a meeting with the game development team?"

"Ah, I've been told that earlier. Can you leave your affiliated company, name, and contact information on this guest list?"

I slightly moved my head sideways because of the unexpectedly troublesome procedure and started completing the contact form.

The female receptionist finally led me away after she copied my filled-out form and stored it in the records room.

If anyone else saw it, they would think I was visiting the White House... Was there really a need to go through this process if they've already heard that I was coming?

Although the building was part of a huge company, there was not a single ant in the hallways.

Everyone was probably stuck in an invention room somewhere

and working non-stop; Fox Soft wanted to keep track of the movements of the employees and placed CCTV cameras in various places.

“Hmmm, Fox Soft has pretty strong security.”

“That’s right. Between us employees, we sometimes call this place ‘Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.’ Chaos would ensue when even one disc comes out of an employee’s belongings when they leave work.”

“Haha... Is that so.”

A moment later.

I was led into the Family software department by the lobby receptionist. Compared to other arcade game development departments that I saw on my way here, it was considered to be pretty small. As I stepped into the inventions office, the four inventors who were working simultaneously turned their heads towards me.

“Hello. I’m the director of the Console Development department from Mintendo and I’m here on behalf of your request for assistance.”

I tried to brightened the atmosphere with a smile and extended a greeting first, but the employees’ expressions looked very displeased.

“Kang Junhyuk? Who’s that... Was there a Korean employee in Mintendo?”

“I thought they would at least send Balloon Fight’s Mr. Katawa, or even Mr. Kumamoto Shigeru, but Mintendo is being too harsh... They should’ve sent a person who could work with us on software development. To think they would send a hardware engineer.”

‘Huh... Am I being ignored right now?’

The four employees glared at me with an icy gaze while muttering between themselves, and went back to working.

“Then I’ll be excused.”

The receptionist that led me here bowed, and walked back towards her desk.

What the hell is this? What’s with the atmosphere? I was thrown into this awkward situation, so I decided to look around at the employees who were working.

In 2015, even up to 100 people could be a part of developing a project, but the game development environment in the 1980s required very little personnel; it was enough for one programmer to code the game, one designer to draw the dots, and one person to double as a manager and director to lead the team.

The last person was only responsible for helping out with drawing the dots for the items. Was the situation about this much?

“Hmm...”

I faked a cough and glanced at the programmer's coding screen at the same time.

‘The coding is messy... It's so bad that I can't distinguish between the flag and the execution.’

Then, I stared at the screen of the designer who was making the dots. Inside the monitor was a character in a black suit, making an irritated expression.

‘Is this war themed? After all, military themes are pretty popular, especially after the release of Rambo 2 last year...’

At that moment, the team leader who was closely watching my actions called me over.

“Excuse me. Mr. Kang Junhyuk? Can I call you that? I'm Yoritomo.”

“Ah, you can just comfortably call me Kang-kun?”

“Is that right? Anyways Kang-kun, are you familiar with software programming? Something like a major project...

something that we would know?”

“You guys have heard of Duck Hunt, right?”

To my response, the employees in the office all turned their heads and glared. Of course, there wouldn't be anyone here who wouldn't know of the first ever game to utilize an electronic gun that revolutionized the shooting games at home. At that moment, a young man who looked to be a helper-employee opened his mouth.

“That got popular because Mr. Gunpei made the electronic gun, the actual game could be coded by any beginner.”

‘Ho? This young fucker is blatantly trash talking.’

The team leader nodded in agreement with the young man and added:

“That's right. Mr. Gunpei's electronic gun was amazing.”

Hur... That idea was proposed by me, these people are being way too disrespectful... I had no choice but to talk about my contribution to the making of Super Marigee.

“Super Marigee, which incorporated the invented of Side Scrolling technology, was also another genius invention by Mr. Shigeru, and was a work of art that put him in the spotlight.”

Fuck!! It was me who introduced him to the idea of Side Scrolling!! However, I quickly fixed my line of thought. The Side Scrolling and the electronic gun were made by them after all. It could be argued that my accomplishments were negligible if you took out the fact that I just sped up what would happen in the future.

However, that was that. Who does this little assistant employee, who was stuck in this tiny corner, think he is to criticize my every word? I barely managed to keep my poker face and asked a question to that employee.

“You’re not wrong. I haven’t released any games under my name, and you could say that all I’ve done was acting as the director. I came here because I’m qualified enough to answer any questions that you might have in place of Mr. Shigeru, so I’m asking for your cooperation. If there is a technical question that I can’t answer, I will go back to the headquarters and send Mr. Shigeru over instead.”

“Krhmm... I understand what you’re saying.”

The team leader drily coughed and called for the programmer, Misaki. The 28 year old Misaki was a pot belly who was wearing a loose t-shirt with an extended neck. I didn’t like how he was glaring at me through his raised glasses, but I decided to be patient.

“Oii, Misaki, explain to him about the game we’re making, and ask him for some advice.”



“Come sit over here first.”

I looked at the blueprint of the game that was laid out on the table. On top of the huge bundle of papers, the attractive title: - Never Die Soldier-was written.

‘They’re definitely getting the inspiration from Rambo. I can already guess what the plot will be about just by seeing the title...’

As I showed interest in the blueprint, the programmer called Misaki raised his glasses and spoke to me with a fake sincerity.

“I’ll give you a simple explanation of the game that we’re developing first.”

‘I don’t think he has to say anything?’

## Chapter 21 : Sponsor Game (4)

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As I expected, the game ‘Never Die Soldier’ that they were developing was of the military genre and was about a special ops soldier who swept the battle fields.

I learned a few more things while I was listening to them; the concept of this “Never Die Soldier” game was surprisingly from that assistant employee in the office corner. Unfortunately, it seemed as though Mr. Misaki came up with the crappy title...

In this era, it was commonplace for the programmer to also come up with the storyline for the game. The reason for that was because the programmer had to determine if they had the ability to code the narrative.

Of course, an advantage to a game programmer writing the story themselves was that they were able to quickly remove bugs and swiftly produce the game. However, it would be hard for them to make classic creation...

I briefly glanced at the script and saw that the code was just a ‘person shooting’ version of an ‘airplane shooting’ game. I felt no particular enjoyment from the game’s simple gameplay that consisted of dodging the enemy bullets and overwhelming them with even more power.

“I’m actually a military maniac. That’s why with ‘Never Die Soldier’, I wanted to bring the players a realistic feeling of being in a war, but the technicality is difficult.”

Mr. Masaki's question was a very simple one, it was about how to make many objects appear on the screen. It seemed like he wanted to depict an image of the last soldier resolutely standing alive, surrounded by countless enemies...

Then I shall give him the simple answer.

"It's going over the limits."

"Excuse me?"

Mr. Masaki looked at me with an awkward face as I, a Mintendo employee, gave a very lackadaisical answer from my mouth.

"The game that Mr. Misaki is developing is impossible to operate with the current Family. If you're a programmer, Mr. Misaki, you should also be familiar with the current boundaries of the Family. Our Family uses a custom CPU so it's able to support any type of game to a certain extent, but unfortunately, since the CPU also handles the sound production, it wouldn't be able to bear the additional output of graphics. Although the VRAM is helping out with the graphics, it's only 2KB, so there are only so many things it can do."

(TL: Yes. A RAM of 2KB. gg)

"Isn't that why we asked for help from Mintendo to resolve this problem? Doesn't Mr. Shigeru's 'The Legend of Karin', that was

released late last year, also have a map as well as a variety of objects on the screen? It looks like Mintendo is hiding production techniques from us.”

“Not at all. We started the development of that game along with the making of the Family, so we’ve accumulated the know-how. We don’t remove the ‘limit’ or anything like that when we make the games ourselves.”

“Then what’s the deal with the plethora of animated objects in The Legend of Karin?”

“That is...”

I briefly slowed the tempo of my words for a moment, then brightly smiled and replied:

“It’s a trick of the eye. You’d know if you analyze the fighting scenes of The Legend of Karin. Although it looks as if a countless number of enemies are appearing on the screen, if you look closely, there is a set number of enemies that fight with the main character. The rest of the enemies are there to fill up the space and give the player a sense of urgency and let them know what’s coming next. And when the main character kills one enemy, an enemy in the surroundings immediately replace the dead one, so it’s creating the illusion of a constant barrage.”

However, Mr. Masaki was wearing a clueless expression, as if he hadn’t understood a thing I said. Now, now... Is this guy really a programmer? His train of thought was inflexible... In the end, I

gave him another hint as I shook my head.

“A barrage of enemies isn’t a prerequisite to capture the feeling of war.”

“Mmm? Then in what way would...?”

“You should think creatively. Isn’t it the director’s job to bring the gamers entertainment by maximizing the potential of a limited resource? For example...”

“For example...?”

“Maybe something like infiltration...”

At that moment, the assistant employee, who was chucked away in the office corner, looked at me with an incredulous pair of eyes.

This guy looked at me with the rabbit-like eyes of a child whose thoughts were found out, and started paying attention to our conversation.

Who in the world is he? I, who was in the middle of a conversation with Mr. Misaki, turned my head and asked the assistant employee:

“What is your name, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Ah, my name is Hojima Hideki.”

What!! You’re Hojima Hideki?! You were working at Fox Soft already after all. However, along with Mr. Kawatashi, to think that Hojima was also an assistant employee... Did all genius directors start off like this? I briefly stared at him for a moment before asking Mr. Masaki a question.

“Have you heard of the phrase ‘Brain Storming’ perhaps?”

“Brain Storming? What’s that? Is that a character development technique?”

This guy knows nothing at all... As I stared at him with a pathetic look, the answer came out of Hojima’s mouth.

“You’re talking about when everyone gives their opinion on a specific topic, and compile them to select the best idea from the pile.”

“Bingo~ You’re right. It’s good to have varying opinions when developing a game. Our Mintendo is also frequently doing this with Mr. Shigeru in the inventions room. The Legend of Karin was a project that was birthed from an overflow of ideas. What does Mr. Hojima think about my ‘Infiltration’ theme?”

His eyes started to shine with light from being dull up until now. Hojima Hideki was one of the world’s top game directors in 2015 where I’ve lived.

There was a game about the cold war called Full Metal Gear with the main character “Snake” who infiltrated countries with nuclear development capabilities, and completed missions by going past a countless number of security. Needless to say, it was tremendously popular in Japan as well as America.

“The theme is not about defeating the enemies and moving forward, but hiding and not being discovered by the enemies and reaching the goal?”

“That’s exactly right. Rather, reaching the destination without killing any enemies would be the unique point of the game. I thought of this while seeing the number of security cameras on my way here; what do you think about inducing excitement through dodging the security cameras and guards in the enemy base?”

“That sounds like an incredibly unique gameplay method. Going through the game by not being discovered by the enemy~ Actually, I was also thinking about a similar game to this. That’s why I was shocked when you said the word infiltration. To think that there was another person who was thinking of the same things as me...”

However, Mr. Masaki seemingly had other thoughts.

“Hah~ Stop being funny. There’s no way gameplay like that would be entertaining. A man should be directly battling the enemies; the main character’s image would plummet if he hid from everyone like a bullied kid.”

Ah... Is that right? Trying to act cool when you'd be the first one to run in a bad situation...

In the end, after discussing about this military game until nightfall, we came down to two opposing viewpoints.

During this time period, creating a game that utilized 2D graphics was so simple that it could be completed with 4~5 people voraciously working on it for three months, so it was possible to start both ideas at the same time.

It wasn't like there was a cut scene or any 3D graphics...

Making objects was easy as you can just make them with dots~

On top of that, Mr. Hojima had come up with a basic direction for Full Metal Gear while sitting in the corner up until now, so he was able to provide significant contributions with his outburst of creative ideas.

A blueprint could be analogized with building a model figurine. The blueprint that he came up with was comparable to a complete instruction on building the figurine.

In the end, Team Manager Yorimoto nodded his head towards the suggestion from Hojima and I, and gave permission to produce the demo for the new spy genre, infiltration.

Consequently, Masaki, who was the main programmer, was



placed in an awkward situation. He was probably not enjoying the fact that the military game that he was a main part of took on a completely new direction. However, it was a somewhat completed game with a finished dot work, so it's a bit wasteful to leave it like this...

“I'm not saying your game is bad, Mr. Masaki. After the release of Rambo 2, it stirred the masculinity of the male players, so I think a macho-like military game would definitely work well.”

“Ri-Right?”

Mr. Masaki stared at me with trembling pupils as I showed support to his side. A memory of a particular game surfaced from my childhood memories as I saw his blueprint, and offered a piece of advice to him.

“However, Mr. Masaki's game is on a large scale, so let's aim for the arcade market with it. If you agree with one proposition of mine, I will help with the development of Mr. Hojima and Mr. Masaki's games here.

“What... proposition do you have?”

“Please let us change the title... The title ‘Never Die Soldier’... The name is too blunt.”

“Then what else do you have in mind?”

“Mr. Masaki, you’re fascinated with the burning spirit of a man. Hmm, how about “Undying Spirit”? Let’s try to grow this game in the arcade market, which currently has no innovations, before moving it to the Family.”

“Undying Spirit... Undying Spirit... Uh? That sounds good?”

The year 2015.

It was a masterpiece that anyone would remember if they’ve played video games as a child. The plan to add Undying Spirit to the list of legendary games, which contained Rambo and Komando, started like this.

The late night meeting finally came to an end, and as I packed my belongings to head back to the headquarters dormitory, the employees who were in the invention room with me all stood up from their seats.

“Then I’ll be leaving soon. If you have any questions, contact me any time. There has been an influx of requests for technical help recently, but we have Mr. Shigeru in the office and Mr. Kawata also became a part of Mintendo, so they should be able to answer most of your questions through the phone.”

“We’re very thankful. We’ve killed two birds with one stone by discovering a new genre of games and taking the military game one step further thanks to your help, Mr. Kang.”

Team Manager Yorimoto showered his gratitude towards me. A moment later, the employees came out of the building to send me off, which was completely different from their initial denial of my existence, and I left the Fox Soft building.

I had an incredibly busy work schedule while approaching the autumn of 1986. On that day, I was running out of the company with a toast in my mouth, stamped the going-out-of-the-company stand, and was hurriedly running out the door as usual.

“Hey~!! Kang-kun. Where are you going today?! Are you going to Fox Soft again?”

I was done with my work in Fox Soft since last month. First, I had given various know-hows to Hojima, that was also used in The Legend of Karin such as Top View, to help with the theme of the spy genre. As he insisted on perfecting the game, I also imparted the Side Scrolling stage, the Scroll View, and the shooting stage and compiled them together to be able to do tons of action. However, the development period would probably be extended because of the slow-witted Masaki holding everything up.

“I’m going to Phoenix Soft today.”

## Chapter 22 : Sponsor Game (5)

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“Oh~ Phoenix Soft created Dragon Warrior.”

“Yes, that’s right. They informed us that they’ll be starting cartridge production starting next month, but since the company is a major player in the field of consoles, it’d be good for Mr. Shigeru to go there and personally oversee the inspection process.”

“That’s right, that’s right~ That way we can release the 3rd edition to our Family, so it wouldn’t be a bad idea to stamp our faces there. Shige really thought this through. Well then, Kang-kun, have a great time there~”

President Yamauchi was grinning like a maniac after seeing all the royalties from the game developers pouring in each month. The business model for Mintendo’s stock had done a complete 180 flip recently. Mintendo switched every production line, from toy manufacturing to family consoles, to change the company image from a toy maker into a game company.

After the Family’s launch three years ago, the current Mintendo maintained about 30% of Japan’s economy. In other words, Mintendo was one of the three big players in the playground.

Additionally, there were a few instances that became not-too-funny because of the sheer size of its popularity; after the new consoles were shipped, they would clear out within a week, which caused the Family to become a fairly rare item in small cities.

What the children wanted was the Family, but adults who didn't know that often gifted the NEGA Disk, which was easier to find, but resulted in the ensuing rage of kids. Consequently, NEGA suffered a massive headache due to the ever increasing number of returns.

It's understandable, my parents were like that too when I was a kid. All games would look the same to adults.

I remember feeling a great deal of frustration and shock upon being gifted a NEGA Disk when I was young, I even started crying due to it. I had specifically told them to buy Mintendo's Family back then, but my parents bought the domestic version of the NEGA Disk.

They must have paid for the expensive item and expected me to be happy, but I felt sorry now for only showing vexation and tears back then. I'm missing my parents now... I wonder if they're doing well?

“I'll leave and come back later.”

I left the headquarters building after saying goodbye to President Yamauchi. I had to travel by subway because Phoenix was located in Tokyo and I was too tired to drive there myself. Plus, it usually took longer anyway, so I mostly used the subway.

Because of the flourishing competition in this period, many new startups located themselves in Tokyo. Thanks to that, I was taking a business trip of two days to reach the Tokyo headquarters.

It would be easier if Mintendo also moved their headquarters to Tokyo, but Mintendo was set up by President Yamauchi's ancestors in 1889, and it was almost approaching the 100th anniversary.

Moving a company like this was impossible from the start...

As per usual, I boarded the subway and ate a packed lunch. After I finished eating, I stood up and looked for the rest area in the train to aid digestion with a smoke. I don't enjoy smoking, but I puff a cigar every once in awhile after a meal. Why do I want to smoke a cigar whenever I board the train?

Cell phones haven't come out yet, so there was not much to do while sitting down, and I was already familiar with the story of the currently trending Dragon Ball so it wasn't fun. New projects that debuted in the 1980s were not enough to interest me.

'Director Kang, you always seem to have an amazing fashion sense.'

A Mintendo employee said this to me quite some time ago. Now that I think about it, Elise said this to me when I was in America as well.

From my point of view, I was just wearing the style that I enjoyed wearing in 2015; I heard many compliments about my fashion. A salesman from the 80s always wore a jet black suit and a dull-colored necktie as formal attire, but I wore a business casual suit

with a slightly brighter tone, so it was eye-catching.

In the beginning, President Yamauchi ordered me to wear the same attire as the other employees. However, recently my business trips outside have become more frequent, and most importantly, President Yamauchi placed the most value on a person's ability, so he didn't try to berate me anymore. It was not like I wear anything outlandish anyway~ Plus, there were cases where he made exceptions for employees that came back from working overseas...

-Plop

I sat down on the table in the rest area and lit a fire for my cigarette. As I looked around at the people, be they an adult or a child, everyone was holding their Game & Watch and focused intently on the screens. The game that they were currently playing was the Game & Watch edition of The Legend of Karin.

If the GamBoy project was completed well, it would probably spell the end of the Game & Watch. At that moment, the Game & Watch that I received from the old man in the arcade store came to mind. I carried it around with me just in case something happened, but I barely played it in recent times.

There was already enough money in my bank account to last me a lifetime, even if I didn't play the 'Employee's Game', and as I was already familiar with the executives inside the company, networking naturally followed so there was no need to use the GPS function of the Game & Watch.

“I’m bored. Should I have a go at playing it again?”

My Game & Watch was only different in color from The Legend of Karin’s Game & Watch edition so it shouldn’t stand out too much... Even if someone asked about it, I can just say it’s a new model in its testing period. I turned on the Game & Watch to relieve my boredom, not to make money. A moment later, my face hardened as I stared at the game screen.

‘The game... It changed...’

The Game & Watch had transformed itself to the latest model with a touchscreen, 3D screen, etc... and it displayed the words ‘Sponsor Game’ on the screen.

-Press the Start Button to begin the game-

‘Sponsor Game’? It was a completely different game from the previous ‘Employee’s Game’? I had a strange sense of anticipation as I pressed the start button; a simple prologue started up. Thereafter, I learned that the main character in the game was me.

The prologue told the story of a character that time travelled to the past to save a Game Company in turmoil. The funny thing was that the game companies inside the game existed in real life, and a click showed all of the characteristics of the game company, such as their operation status, capital, and the current titles that they were developing.



As an experiment, I clicked on the Phoenix company that I was currently heading to, and a notice popped up about the game, Dragon Warrior 2, undergoing its last inspection. The internal situation of the company was very stable, and the morale of the employees were high. Was that because they were a major-league game developer? Seeing how this information would currently be impossible to poach from Phoenix employees, perhaps this device would be very useful for diplomatic purposes?

Fox Soft's 'Full Metal' was currently 52% completed, so it was progressing relatively well... After Mr. Hojima was appointed as the main director, the development speed definitely increased... Next, I took a look at Triangle Soft, which I had lately shown interest towards.

-Director Kawaguchi's 'King's Quest'. 5200 units in the market. No games in development soon.-

5200 units was a total deficit... This was before Triangle Soft made the popular title 'Final Frontier', so they were in a difficult situation due to each game resulting in a sales slump.

However, seeing their current company situation, I could understand the sentiment of putting the word 'Final' in 'Final Frontier' that they would later release... 'Final Frontier' would go on to be a figurehead that would lead the era with its diverse graphics. I remember after playing 'Final Frontier 7', that was released in SenSony's Playstation, my heart almost froze...

For everything, a 'classic' possessed a miraculous effect. The first Family's RPG game, 'Dragon Warrior', was coined the game of the

nation, and the sequel to it was already approaching cartridge production in the near future.

If the first game in the series was about a single brave warrior rescuing the prince, the following sequel would include a party system for friends to join each other on a journey to defeat the Demon King.

On top of that, the sequel was directly related to the original game, so the warriors that would fight against the Demon King were the grandsons and granddaughters of the original Dragon Warrior... Gamers that had immensely enjoyed the first game were eagerly anticipating the sequel.

If the current situation continued, even if they released 'Final Frontier', it would get swept under the rug by 'Dragon Warrior 2'.

I could help them out right now, but now was not the right time. Not yet.

Should I phrase it as finally aiding them when they were at wits end? Just like how hitting rock bottom was the driving force for characters in comics.

Anyway, a 'Sponsor Game'... To think I would be able to view information about the industry at a glance... This was very interesting, since what I needed now was not money, but human capital...

That evening, I arrived at the Phoenix company and was directed by the employees to the Dragon Warrior 2's development department.

“Hello. I am Mintendo's Kang Junhyuk.”

“Ah~ Mr. Junhyuk!! Welcome~”

The atmosphere of Phoenix's development team was vastly different from Fox Soft. The development was already finished and they were awaiting the cartridge production which was just around the corner, so the office atmosphere was very calm.

“Thank you for personally coming here for the inspection. It looks like we'll have fewer difficulties.”

“Not at all. For cases like Dragon Warrior, President Yamauchi gave a quick approval for production after knowing this title brought additional traction for our Family console sales.”

“We can feel the love Mintendo is showing towards our company, haha.”

“Of course. We also have high expectations for the upcoming 'Dragon Warrior 2'. Customers would also line up to buy it this time around, right?”

“The release of The Legend of Karin was a sensation. I heard that the limited edition marketing strategy was thought up by you, Mr.

Kang Junhyuk. You're accomplishments are incredible at such a young age."

"That's an overstatement... Haha..."

How long are pleasantries going to go on for?! In the end, I could finally start the inspection after exchanging pleasantries with the development team for ten minutes.

As the nostalgic theme tune and the Dragon Warrior logo appeared on the screen, I unconsciously drew a proud smile on my face.

## Chapter 23 : Sponsor Game (6)

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“I felt this before, but it seems like Dragon Warrior focuses greatly on the sound aspect. Although the music is simple, I can feel the profound magnificence emanating from the beat.”

“We’re receiving a sound inspection from an orchestra conductor.”

“Also, isn’t the cartridge case illustration done by Mr. Toriyama, who is also producing Dragon Ball?”

“That’s correct. Mr. Toriyama has been entrusted with character illustrations ever since the first game of the series. Due to the limitations of our current technology, it will be difficult to display the quality of graphics that we wish to put on the screen. In order to solve this issue, we went with the alternative of requesting illustrations from the famous Mr. Toriyama, who would be able to create graphics that would allow gamers to fully immerse themselves within the game.”

Up until this moment, Dragon Warrior’s graphics utilized a very simple color scheme. This was especially obvious when looking at the main character from the first game, as the warrior was clad in all blue... There was almost no difference in the sequel. The graphics for magic battles were just a combination of flashing red and yellow lights, and the battle scenes were also depicted with a monster drawn on the middle of a dark screen.

‘When I was a kid, I felt like I was actually exploring a story book

while playing ‘Dragon Warrior 4’ for the first time, but the difference compared to how I remember it is pretty extreme.’

I inputted “Ahhh” as the character name and quickly started the game.

“Mr. Kang, it seems like you’re not putting much importance on the character name.”

There is a reason that you guys don’t know why I named the warrior, “Ahhh”.

Even in the 80’s, when the internet didn’t exist, there were many players who enjoyed playing Dragon Warrior domestically. The reason was because businesses, commonly coined “The Poachers”, bought the Family and a few other games from Japan and brought them back to Korea to sell, and made a huge profit from them.

That was a period of time when there was too little information about games. The only way to know what the game was about was from the cover art drawn on the game’s case. I think it was the year 1991? One day, when pirated copies of Dragon Ball were gaining massive popularity, I remember walking down the streets and passing by a game store when an illustration from a package immediately enraptured me.

It was obviously drawn with the same style as Dragon Ball; I was so excited that night that I had trouble falling asleep. I was greatly anticipating what kind of game it was for a Dragon Ball-like character to be on the package.

A few days after that, I was barely able to buy Dragon Warrior after begging my mom, and it was a huge disappointment. This was because I was used to action games and hadn't played the RPG genre.

No, that period was when the action genre was considered the entirety of gaming. Action games were all about moving humans, or airplanes, or cars, or whatever, and destroying the enemy, but the gameplay of Dragon Warrior was just moving from town to town and fighting creatures. And on top of that, it was incredibly frustrating as you would get annihilated by powerful monsters if you went even a little bit out of the safety zone.

“What kind of game is this?!”

Back then, I was infuriated and did not take a second glance at Dragon Warrior 4. I felt like I got tricked by the amazing illustration on the cover. A few days later, I took the game and went back to the game shop.

“I want to exchange this for another game.”

The game store owner, who also built computer parts, looked at the Dragon Warrior game that was in my outstretched hands and answered:

“Wait just a moment.”

After a brief moment, the owner used the black and white printer and started printing something. I remember the quiet store being filled with a cacophony of printing noises for quite awhile.

“I’d normally take money for printing this much out, but I’ll give it to you for free. About this game, it gave me the most enjoyment out of all the Family games, but it must’ve been hard for you to understand because you’re so young. You don’t know Japanese after all. However, would you give the game another try with this strategy guide? You will experience an adventure that you’ve never experienced before in games.”

I went back home after receiving the stack of papers, that was the Dragon Warrior 4 strategy guide, plugged the Dragon Warrior cartridge into the Family, and started the power button. A magnificent tune flew out of the device as I used the guide from the owner to slowly enjoy the game.

First of all, levels existed in this game.

What that meant was, one couldn’t just brazenly walk into the cave near the town. You had to grind the weaker monsters near the town and raise your level first.

As you became familiar with dealing with the surrounding creatures, you could finally walk into the cave without being killed instantly.

A character that got correspondingly more powerful as it was leveled. Also, this plot was about a warrior that had found the



missing children and headed towards the tower—I was deeply immersed.

The plot of Dragon Warrior 4 presented the story in a very unique and all-rounded style as an RPG. The 1st chapter was about the warrior, Rion; the 2nd chapter was a story about the dream of a princess to take over the San Maria Kingdom; the 3rd chapter was the story of the arms dealer, Tolneko; the 4th chapter was about the shaman brother and sister duo; the 5th and final chapter introduced the main character of the story.

At the beginning of the 5th chapter, I remember screaming in ecstasy at the story of the warrior's girlfriend transforming into a warrior that used magic as she exchanged her life for his.

After that, I felt so sad towards the BGM of the warrior walking out of town. I would control the bereaved warrior to stand in the town and stay still for a while, and I would also imagine the conversations between the bereaved warrior and his friends.

There was a unique fun in imagining the scenes in that period of underdeveloped graphics....

Ah, I drifted away on a tangent...

Anyway, in that period, where everyone was blind to Japanese, the main character was informally known as “Ahhh” in their minds. The reason was because the sound of the first syllable started with an “Ahhh”.

They couldn't read the rest of the words anyway, so what did it matter if they knew one letter...

At that moment, the door of the development office opened as a man in his early 30's walked in.

“Eh hey, how are you all~”

“Ah~!! Teacher Toriyama!! You came.”

“I briefly came inside after hearing that the inspection for Dragon Warrior 2 was being held here.”

Mmm!? The creator of Dragon Ball, Mr. Toriyama, is here? I hurriedly put the machine down on the table and stood up from my seat.

Mr. Toriyama immediately recognized me as an employee from Mintendo and extended his hand.

“Ah~ You're the inspector from Mintendo. You're name is...?”

“My name is Kang Junhyuk, and I'm in charge of the new console development department at the Mintendo headquarters.”

“You look very young; it's incredible that you're already a director for a department.”

“I’m an enthusiastic fan of Dragon Ball.”

I actually liked Slam Dunk more, but there was no need to say that here~ The Mr. Toriyama of 1986 was barely over 30 years old.

He took over all of the illustrations for the Dragon Warrior series. Later on he would personally develop the characters and have deep ties with Phoenix.

It wouldn’t be harmful to network with this figure would it? After shaking hands with Mr. Toriyama, I went back to inspecting the game with the other developers.

In actuality, there was no need to do a thorough inspection due to the incredible popularity of the first game.

The inspection from Nintendo was not about finding all of the bugs, and it was rather enjoyable as a whole.

“You caught most of the bugs, right?”

The main director, Mr. Ouchi, nodded his head in response. Due to undiscovered bugs, there were major incidents of mass cartridge recalls, so all of the companies paid a lot of attention to fixing bugs.

“Before, the main character was alone, but making a party is possible for this release. I thought battles would be easier because of that, but the difficulty level was adjusted correspondingly so my

trepidation is overflowing.”

“We’ve given background stories for multiple characters as well to increase the immersion. We think the players would enjoy this.”

A game developer should definitely put the players first. In that sense, the main director of Dragon Warrior, Mr. Ouji, was an incredibly diligent planner.

“It received a near perfect score on the FamiTong review, so we just have to wait for the popularity to explode after the release.”

“We have some level of expectations, but do you really think it would make a big enough splash that is comparable to The Legend of Karin? I was also at the place of the event on the release date, and the player’s reactions were enormous. Especially for the 500 limited edition golden cartridges, I heard it was selling for 20,000 thousand yen—did you know that?”

“A few dishonest store owners could have stored a few away instead of displaying all of them on the release date. We’ll cut negotiations with those shops. We can’t allow our users to be harmed no matter the reason.”

Mr. Toriyama and Mr. Ouji nodded their heads and agreed with me. As I stood up after completing the two hour long inspection, Mr. Ouji asked me a question with a glare filled with anticipation.

“Excuse me for asking this, but what are your personal thoughts

after reviewing the game, Mr. Kang?”

This man said he wasn't expecting much, but what does he want me to say after immediately glaring at me like that as soon as I finished the inspection? I answered shortly after.

“Hmm... Can I give an honest opinion?”

“Ah, yes. Of course.”

“I can't pinpoint the unique quality compared to the prequel.”

“What?”

“Mmm~ The party system is great, and the part about hopping on a boat to explore the ocean is new, but the product isn't as deep as I'd expect for a project that was in development for one year.”

“Ah, is that so...”

“For your 3rd game of the series, the descendents of the warrior wouldn't come on, right? The main plot of Dragon Warrior is about a warrior defeating the Demon King, so the more you stretch the story, the more repetitive it would get, so you should be careful. From the perspective of a gamer that enjoyed Dragon Warrior... Mmm, I think it would be interesting if you took the story direction to an omnibus style.”

“An omnibus style...?”

“For example... The 3rd game that everyone would be anticipating... How about a storyline from the era before the 1st game?”

“Ah!! That’s a great idea~!! A similar world but using the ending point as a reference to continue with the original story!! It’s very innovative~!! That’s great!! You have a very perceptive view, as I’ve heard from Mr. Shigeru. I’ll keep that in mind.”

What? So Mr. Shigeru and Mr. Ouji knew each other... Actually, this “innovative” opinion of mine was from Mr. Shigeru. He was making an odd face when I told him that I’d go as the inspector—so that was the reason...

On the way back to Kyoto from the train, as the man beside me fell asleep, I took this opportunity to open up the Game & Watch. As I pressed the ‘Sponsor Game’ play button, various messages started to pop up.

-You’ve developed a friendly relationship with Mr. Toriyama-

-You’ve developed a friendly relationship with Mr. Ouji-

-Your reputation with Mr. Ouji has risen by 3 points. The relationship will rank up once the points reach 10-

What kind of fuckstruck game is this?!

## Chapter 24 : Sponsor Game (7)

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I'm getting goosebumps from just thinking about developing relationships with men. My body immediately shivered with this thought and I looked through each and every person that I've made contact with on the people list from 'Sponsor Game'.

Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru were maintaining the highest ranks among my relationships as expected.

'Damn, they are all men...'

How many female game developers could there be? But still... I cleared my throat and browsed around the list when I stopped at President Yamauchi's face. Unlike the others, there was a text bubble next to his face.

'I feel like I'm reading a Kakaotalk message from 2015.'

I smirked and clicked on the text bubble next to President Yamauchi.

-Kang Junhyuk is a genius, but he's an unpredictable bastard that I can't see through. I can't let him grow too much-

So that's how it is... Was the text bubble commenting on a person's thoughts towards me? Interesting. Regardless, he sent me off with a smiling face this morning, but he was hiding this thought in his mind. In the end, he's a manipulative Japanese

businessman...

I put the Game & Watch inside my backpack and heavily leaned my body onto the chair.

No matter how well I crawled and flew, I was just one of the many foreign workers to them... I was also harboring this line of thought in my mind, so I wasn't that surprised after reading President Yamauchi's comment. However, I can't reveal my toenails yet. Let's be patient for a little longer...

When did the Compact Disk that we know today get released? CDs had actually existed in the current year that I'm living in, 1986. It was just that it wasn't well known yet...

A gizmo and gadget street that was located in a place called Den Den Town, Osaka.

Mr. Gunpei and I visited a CD listening session in a record store, and we stared at the shining round disk under the spotlight.

“Ho~ So this is the item called the compact disk. The colour is very beautiful~”

The middle-aged Mr. Gunpei looked around the CDs with a child-like and youthful gaze. A compact disk... It was definitely compact compared to the LP (gramophone records), but compared to me who was used to SD cards and the USB, I could only sigh in response.



I had no real interest, but Mr. Gunpei dragged me into the store saying we had to interact with new technological developments, so eventually, I got led to be standing here.

“Ah, yes... It’s very interesting.”

“You don’t have any reaction after seeing this miraculous product? Now now, a young person like you shouldn’t be devoid of emotions already. Humph Humph~ It looks like I have to give you an additional explanation.”

Waaargh!!! The chatterbox Mr. Gunpei started a product explanation!!! I felt a calamity was coming and quickly tried to escape, but it was too late.

“The thing about this item called a CD is, it’s also known as an Optical Disk. The CD is a way to digitally record sounds in contrast to analog methods like a cassette tape or an LP. Thanks to this, a new standard has been developed for the radio so that you can listen to music without any background noise. Its lifespan is said to be 100 years... Isn’t it truly incredible?”

‘20 years from now, data will become saved electronically, let alone 100 years... But it’s a pretty long lifespan for a music CD...’

However, Mr. Gunpei hadn’t finished explaining yet.

“This CD is a product developed in collaboration between our

Japan's SenSony and Phillips, a company from the Netherlands. Currently, it's in the process of pushing the standard analog products out of the market and they are popularizing this new music listening method. It can store up to 74 minutes with one recording."

"Mmm... That's a bit awkward. Why is it 74 minutes and not 60 minutes?"

In response, Mr. Gunpei shifted his glasses up and mischievously smiled. What...? I just commented on a whim, but I have the feeling that I asked him a legitimate question.

"That's a very~ good question, Kang-kun. The current diameter of the CD is 12 cm, but the very first size Phillips proposed was 11.5 cm. The first version of the CD was able to become even more compact and it was able to hold a little more than 60 minutes of music. Due to the increase in diameter, the maximum capacity of the CD was increased."

"But why was the time lengthened?"

"It was because of Beethoven's 9th Symphony."

"The CD's storage time was because of a classical music?"

"Of course, with the standard 60 minutes of storage, we could have recorded all the songs from LPs, but SenSony proposed that they wanted to fit the entire Beethoven's 9th Symphony into one

disk... At that time, the longest performance of the 9th Symphony was conducted by the famous Maestro Karian.”

“So the length of the storage time of the CD was decided by the length of Karian’s performance?”

“Right~!!”

Hmm... This was a fact that even I didn’t know. The unfortunate truth was it didn’t matter if I knew it or not... Anyways, so the music that was pouring out of the speakers was the entire Beethoven’s 9th Symphony... Mr. Gunpei plugged earphones into his ears and listened for a moment before making a very satisfied face.

“The world is getting better and better. Should I say that the analog era is transforming into the digital era? It’s directed towards audio for now, but I heard that if the storage method was altered a bit, it would be possible to store other forms of data on it. The storage is an astonishing 650 MB, isn’t it incredible?”

“Haha... Yes. A storage capacity of 650 MB, it’s truly out of this world...”

“I thought you would be very surprised, but your reaction is a bit lackluster. That’s disappointing...”

Something like this is only an innovation to a caveman like you... We use the terabyte in 2015, you guys... I shook my head from side

to side and proposed to have a dinner with Mr. Gunpei. At that moment, Mr. Gunpei, who was intently examining the CD, muttered:

“Could I replace the game cartridge with this?”

That must’ve been a comment made without much thought, but in response to Mr. Gunpei’s words, my heart crashed with a heavy thud. The use of the CD would only be widely spread at a minimum of two generations from now, but to think that he could think of this the first time after seeing the disk... However, Mr. Gunpei shook his head and continued:

“But to do that, the storage inefficiency would be too great, and the console’s base price would rise as well...”

“Th-That’s right... Haha...”

A Family’s game was only 4 MB at most... The current time period was still where the making of huge games were limited by the limited capabilities of consoles. However... if Mr. Gunpei’s idea had continued to the start of the 90s, Mintendo would’ve transformed into an immortal corporation...

A period of time had passed and it was the release day of Dragon Warrior 2. Mr. Shige and I visited Mintendo’s announcement conference. There were swathes of people camping outside already; this scene was pretty similar to the release day of The Legend of Karin.

“I’m feeling a fresh emotion after returning to Tokyo like this.”

Mr. Shige, who was currently taking a break from work, was bathing in a glorious feeling after seeing the huge line. He definitely must be comparing it with the release day of The Legend of Karin. After a while, as I entered the event along with Mr. Shige, Mr. Ouji, who was currently at an interview, ran over to us with a welcoming face.

“Mr. Kang and Mr. Shigeru, thank you for coming together.”

“Seeing these huge lines, I can realistically feel that Dragon Warrior is the nation’s RPG game.”

“Haha, it’s still a distance from your The Legend of Karin, Mr. Shigeru...”

It came again!! This endless exchange of pleasantries!! I started my attack in fear that 10 more minutes would pass like this.

“What did you set as the number of the initial volume?”

“Yeah... The prequel sold about 1.5 million copies, so we stocked around 500,000 units initially. We will increase the production after watching the reaction for one week. We set the price of the game to 5,500 Yen.”

The games that came out of 3rd party companies, that paid royalties to Mintendo, tended to have higher prices. Recently, due

to President Yamauchi increasing the royalties, all of the other companies' prices had gone up as a result, but Phoenix kept their prices the same...

“I thought Dragon Warrior would sell for at least 5,900 Yen, but I was surprised that Dragon Warrior's price hadn't gone up by much. Isn't the increase in royalties, demanded by our president, being a burden?”

“In all honesty, we had discussions within our company to raise the price by a little, but we made this difficult decision to thank our players for supporting us. Dragon Warrior is targeted to children, so increasing the price would place a burden on the parents as well.”

“Mmm... So that's how it was. I'll believe that was a good decision.”

A moment later.

As the event opened with Dragon Warrior's magnificent theme song, the people in the lines started to rush to the counter.

Immediately after the shutters were lifted, the swath of people made me recall a scene in a zombie flick from 2000.

“Everyone, keep your order~!! Please stand in line at the four counters~!!”

After waiting, the people who finally got to purchase the game ran out of the event as if they wanted to play it as soon as possible.

‘I can understand that thought perfectly...’

I, who was behind a counter, picked up a Dragon Warrior cartridge and brightly smiled. Inside the cover illustration, that Mr. Toriyama drew, there was a simple manual, and inside the plastic package was the firmly placed black cartridge.

Kah~ There is definitely a nostalgic scent emanating from a package in this period. I joyously felt the weight as I spoke to Mr. Ouji:

“I’ll purchase one too.”

“Ah, you want to buy a copy from us, Mr. Kang?”

“I’m also a fan of the game too. I have no time to actively play it, but I still want to keep it with me.”

“This is~ Thank you very much~!!”

As I finished my purchase and was looking around at the event, I felt a strange gaze and turned my head around; there was one man who was staring inside at the event.

With a bone-skinny body and a unique mustache, the features of

this man stood out from the crowd. The man stared intensely at the Dragon Warrior event and our gazes happened to meet before he started leaving the venue.

“Hmphhh...”

‘Mmn...?’

That man seems familiar... could he be!? The director of Final Frontier, Kawaguchi Hironobu!? I quickly hastened my footsteps to catch the man who was increasing his distance from the event.



## Chapter 25 : Sponsor Game (8)

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“Mr. Kawaguchi!!”

As expected, after I shouted his name, the man turned his head toward my direction with a confused expression.

“You are Triangle’s Kawaguchi Hironobu, correct?”

“You know of me?”

“Aren’t you the director of King’s Quest?”

“Th-That’s right... But how did you...?”

“I’m Mintendo’s Kang Junhyuk. I saw you on the game developer’s introduction page of the FamiTong magazine.”

“Ah, is that so...”

Mr. Kawaguchi finally nodded his head and lifted his guard toward me as he opened his mouth to speak.

“Of course, a successful company like Mintendo is able to send their employees to the release event for a game.”[\[1\]](#)

“Ah, that’s because the impact of Dragon Warrior is quite large.

Haha~”

“Compared to that, the game that I developed, King’s Quest, just recently barely broke 6,000 sales. However, due to Nintendo suddenly raising the royalty, we incurred complete losses.”

“Ah, is that right?”

“‘Ah, is that right?’ What are you trying to say. Are you trying to make fun of me with that rude remark?”

“No, not at all. However, I was not the person to raise the royalties, right? I don’t think you should be getting mad at me?”

“Kurghhh...”

As if Mr. Kawaguchi felt wronged at not being able to find words to respond, he made an irritated sound and bit down on his teeth. Although, President Yamauchi’s behavior has been tyrannical as of recently.

As if it was not enough to raise the base price for the production, as he tyrannically controlled the supply of production, the current game companies had to produce at least 10,000 copies at the bare minimum.

In other words, the King’s Quest that Mr. Kawaguchi made had sold 6,000 units in the three months that it was out, so it was hard to sell now.

Because a plethora of new games was flooding into the market, and games that were unable to make a splash were quickly to be forgotten... Triangle must've taken a deficit bomb to the face by holding the remaining 4,000 unsold cartridges.

It was great that companies were producing good quality games to wash away the aftermath of the Atari Shock, but in Mintendo's monopoly system, it was hard for game developers to gain any sort of benefits.

“It seems to me that Triangle's situation isn't good?”

“Initially, we set the starting volume to 2,000 and tried to increase the stock after assessing the number of sales, but Mintendo wouldn't accept it. Thanks to that, our company is this much away from bankruptcy.”

“Was it that harsh? Oh dear... Do you perhaps have any games in development right now?”

“We have one idea in mind... but our parent company is seemingly trying to close our game development department...”

What!? No!! My plan will only proceed if you make your Final Frontier!! Mr. Kawaguchi continued with a hollow expression.

“Just once... I wanted to have one last shot with this game...”

“Your last shot... What genre are you thinking of?”

“First of all, it’s an RPG. Actually, I wanted to buy a Dragon Warrior copy today and use it as a reference, but after seeing this humongous crowd on its release today... In all honesty, I lost my will. Would our new game be able to beat Dragon Warrior? That question came up.”

“That’ll be near impossible. No matter what game you make currently, Mr. Kawaguchi, you will never be able to overtake Mr. Ouji’s Dragon Warrior series. They’ve already started developing the 3rd game.”

“Kurghhh... I’m hearing that as us having no chances of beating Dragon Warrior, even with a new game.”

”Yes, that’s right. That’s the foundation that the biggest RPG game in Japan, with the most popularity, has. However, the 2nd place is still empty, how about aiming for that spot first?”

I gave the shopping bag that I was holding in my hands to Mr. Kawaguchi.

“What is this...?”

“This is the Dragon Warrior 2 that I purchased a moment ago from the event.”

“Then why are you giving it to...”

“Mr. Kawaguchi, you must be mistaking something, but I specifically said you currently cannot beat the Dragon Warrior series. I never said that you would never be able to beat it. To do that, you must analyze the scale of success of the enemy. You should learn what you need to learn.”

“I’m okay. My idea won’t get approval for production anyways...”

“I’ll talk to our President about that, so you should give Dragon Warrior a try while you’re free. Ah~ and after you clear it, you should return it to me. I bought it today and haven’t played it either.”

I made a bewildered expression and forcefully handed the shopping bag to Mr. Kawaguchi, then headed back to the event.

A few days later. I visited the company, Triangle, in Tokyo. After barely finding the place, with just a glance, I realized that Triangle was occupying the 2nd floor of a shabby four story building. There was a recruitment post on the worn-out notification board on the 1st floor; they were offering 1500 Yen an hour.

The average part-time job in Tokyo paid around 480~500 Yen, so I was shocked at the hourly wage that was 3x greater than normal, then looked at the building again as I muttered:

“No matter how I look at it, I don’t think this company can afford to pay 1500 Yen...”

I shifted my head and walked up the stairs. And a brief moment later, I was greeted by a pile of corrugated boxes that filled the hallway as I immediately stepped onto the 2nd floor.

‘Can these... possibly be?’

As I slightly opened a box due to curiosity, it was filled with game titles.

‘So these are the titles that were never sold and recalled... Why in the world are there so many?’

I sighed as I stared at the tiny office door in between the slits of the boxes. After moving a number of boxes aside and standing in front of the office, I adjusted my clothes and knocked.

“Come in.”

-Creak...

An unpleasant sound flew out of the unoiled hinges, and I, who stepped into the interior of the office, experienced a second moment of shock at the sheer number of boxes inside.

“Who might you be?”

If you were gonna ask like that, you should’ve at least cleared the

boxes by the doorway!? Again, I pushed the boxes aside as I turned my gaze towards the direction of the voice.

“Ah, I just wanted to meet with the president.”

Subsequently, a man in the back, who looked to be in his 40s, answered with a gray colored face:

“Ah~ You’re the new interviewee who was supposed to come today. Please come here.”

Interviewee? What kind of dog s\*\*\* is he saying!? But I, who was wedged in between boxes, lost the chance to reply.

“Ah, no, that is...”

“The office is a bit messy, right? It’ll be cleaned soon, so don’t worry and come here.”

That’s not it, man~!!

A moment later.

I was in an interview with the president, Kudo, inside the narrow Triangle’s office. Yes, should I just pretend to be an interviewee and find out the inner workings of this company?

“Pleased to meet you. I’m taking the role as Triangle Soft’s president, Kudo.”

“Ah, hello. I’m Kang Junhyuk, a Korean transfer student.”

“Korean?”

“Yes, and? Is there a problem?”

“Not at all. I was just surprised at interviewing an overseas student for the first time. Were you here for a long time?”

“Yes, about three years or so?”

“Great... But Mr. Kang, do you know how to program? The employees that we’re hiring are programmers to develop games for the Family console...”

“Of course I can code. However, is the 1500 Yen an hour on the notice board really true?”

Mr. Kudo’s eyebrows twitched slightly. Hmm~ So they were probably hiding something.

“Ah... Yes, haha. The 1500 Yen per hour.”

“It’s much higher compared to other places...?”



“Of course it’s possible if you meet one condition.”

“A condition?”

“Mr. Kang, when a game that you make sells over 5,000 units, you can receive the hourly wage of 1500 Yen; no, I can confidently say that it’ll be more than that.”

Wh-What? So you’re telling me that you would pay the salary after the game was on the market? I was shocked speechless as I responded with hollow laughter:

“What if 5000 units can’t be sold?”

“Then paying the salary would be a bit difficult... Mr. Kang, do you not have confidence in the games that you’ll make?”

Look at this? So you’re trying to bait me into working for you by scratching my ego like this?

“Then what is the base pay without the incentive?”

“It’s 280 Yen.”

They’re f\*cking mother f\*ckers here. I massaged my face with both my hands and let out a long sigh.

This was actually a very rude behavior in an interview, but I didn't come here for an actual interview. Instead, I was suppose to just visit to inspect the company's current situation, but first and foremost, the thought process of the president is rotten.

“Excuse me, Mr. Kudo... I am not the person who came for an interview.”

“What? Then...?”

I took out my business card from my pocket and handed it to Mr. Kudo as I introduced myself again.

“I am the director of Mintendo's next generation inventions department, Kang Junhyuk.”

“A M-Mintendo employee!?”

“The reason I came here was to talk to you, President Kudo, but the topic went off to a completely different discussion.”

“How, why is a Mintendo employee like you here...?”

Instead of a reply, I looked around the box-filled office and opened my mouth.

“Are these boxes games that Triangle Soft developed for our

Family console?”

“Yes... That’s right. We haven’t developed any popular projects yet, but we’ve already produced four titles for the Family, with the recent one being King’s Quest.”

They had no hits even after four titles... That was why their office was littered with trash... However, why was the President alone in the game development office by himself?

“Are there other employees? Why is the president alone in the office on a weekday?”

“There was Mr. Kawaguchi, a programmer who developed King’s Quest, but he hasn’t showed up to work recently.”

“And why is that?”

“That is, King’s Quest didn’t sell as anticipated and his salary was pushed back so...”

He’s going around in circles. I’m not hearing an answer.

“That’s the current situation yet you’re hiring part-time workers?”

“We will get revenue after we make a successful game. However, first of all, why did you visit our company?”

“The reason I came here today was to meet the president.”

“Me?”

“The current situation of Triangle Soft didn’t seem too good. You’ve made four titles for our Family, but there were no hit projects, so I came here to give you some technical help.”

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Notes:

[\[1\]](#) Note that the companies who develop games for Mintendo are a separate entity

## Chapter 26 : Sponsor Game (9)

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“The current financial situation of Triangle Soft doesn’t seem too good. You’ve made four titles for our Family; however, there were no hit projects, so I came here to give you some technical help.”

“Ah, alright, but I’m an outsider to game development, so giving advice to me is a little... It would’ve been good if Kawaguchi was here at this moment.”

“Then are you saying you know nothing about game development at all? And you’re the president of a software company?”

“Haha, isn’t Mintendo’s President Yamauchi also like this? I’m just recruiting talents who can program the game and paying for the labor.”

This guy has the mind of a thief, no? He’s saying that he’s going to sit around and do nothing while the employees do all the work and barely pay the production costs? I’m just baffled... Did a president of a game development company seem that simple?

“Do you have any idea how dangerous what you said is?”

“Excuse me...? What I mean is that my role is similar to President Yamauchi’s...”

“You must have a lot of money then, President Kudo? If you’re

taking on the role as the president of a company, you should at least be able to inspect the marketability of the games that your employees develop. Don't you feel suffocated when you see piles and piles of these cartridges in the office?"

"The thing about the game industry is that we can hit the jackpot in one shot. If just one would explode, then don't you think it would be enough to cover our losses and more? Just like Phoenix's Dragon Warrior."

Oh my god...

Developing a game is not some kind of food stand in front of a subway; what's this attitude of waiting until a title becomes a hit? I fear that I might get dizzy if I talk with him any longer...

I pinched my throbbing temples with my hand and closed my eyes. I've already overviewed Triangle Soft with the Game & Watch before coming here. The current Triangle Soft's financial situation was in ruins, so I brazenly spoke:

"President Kudo, you took a second loan from a financial institution, right?"

"...!?"

President Kudo's face was instantly drained of color; it was as if I had hit the bullseye. In actuality, Triangle Soft's capital was drained even before the release of their King's Quest. President

Kudo must've even taken on a second loan with the mindset of almost trying his luck at a lottery. He started the funding for the production of the cartridges for King's Quest, but it was ultimately a failure and he incurred losses again.

“How... did you?”

“I easily came to this conclusion from looking at the stack of documents in your office. The question is whether there is the capacity to create any more games or not?”

“That is...”

“Hmm? If your second loan fails, do you plan to borrow money from loan sharks?”

“Hak...”

“President Kudo. I truly don't think that's right...”

In the end, President Kudo lowered his head with a depressed expression. I left him alone for awhile and looked around the office. The atmosphere of the company could be felt by observing the office...

The Mintendo HQ that took on the big cartridge production factory and commanded their countless number of workers had an organized and responsible atmosphere. In contrast, Phoenix Soft had a carefree family-like atmosphere. There was also Fox Soft,

who lorded over its employees like a military, etc... There was a variety of different sceneries from various game companies.

From the list, Triangle Soft was the worst and it had the weakest foundation out of all of the companies I had reviewed.

‘But the thing that I truly want is to own my own company...’

I briefly watched President Kudo’s reaction before slightly smiling, and then I spoke to him:

“President Kudo, then how about this?”

The authoritative position of this conversation was completely handed to me. President Kudo, who was drowning in the thoughts of his debt, made a half-collapsed expression while he looked at me.

“You should just hand over this company to me.”

“What did you say?”

“President Kudo, you know as well as I do that you don’t have the strength to develop games anymore, isn’t that right?”

“Bu-But handing over the company is a little...”



“How about this? I will pay off all of Triangle Soft’s debt. On top of that, I’ll pay you 30 million Yen.”[1]

“3... 3... 30 million Yen!?”

30 million Yen was about 300 million in Korean Won. 300 million Won was a tremendous amount of money in the 1980s. From what I knew, the current debt of Triangle, from the bank, was 20 million Yen, so I would be swallowing a company for about 50 million Yen.

“But do you, as an international student, have that much money?”

“I have the funds. The problem is setting up a company from scratch by myself with the status of an international company.”

“Hoo...”

Thinking back, I made two huge mistakes when I first time-travelled to Japan in the 1980s. It was setting my age too young, and my status as an international student that just came to Japan. Because of these two obstacles, I was placed in a position where I was unable to do anything, even with the enormous sum of 20 million USD in my balance.

Why? First, no matter how much money I had, I lived in Japan for too short of a time and thus, I couldn’t register for a business.

For a foreigner to set up a new business in Japan, they had to

have taken residence in Japan for a minimum of 5 years, and they needed experience in that particular field to set up a company.

In addition, it was clear whether the Japanese Government would accept it or not since it was pretty obvious that they wouldn't give permission to a 21 year old Korean international student, no matter how much money he had.

Even if I immediately started a console company, would a console developed by a Korean be successful in the Japanese market? Especially in the period right after the Atari Shock incident? A beginning without any preparation was the road straight to failure... First, I had to build up a career that no one could disrespect.

So, I decided to use Mr. Gunpei.

I used him to gain entrance into Nintendo, who would revive the game industry from the 80s all the way through to the 90s.

In this period of time, the qualifications needed to become an employee weren't as harsh as I thought, so I was easily able to gain entrance to the company by becoming friendly with Mr. Gunpei, who had gotten a position within the company due to the popularity of his Game & Watch.

In addition, the fact that he introduced Mr. Shigeru to me became the driving force behind my success in moving forward.

Thanks to that, I was able to gain a certain amount of credit from President Yamauchi...

So, I was able to gain the status of a contributor of an industry, and the rest would be taken care of by the flow of time. However... I had no clue that this bastard President Yamauchi would fly me over to America.

In the end, I spent a one year period of time in America, but the experience wasn't bad either. On the contrary, I became a figure that rivaled Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru inside Nintendo, and my path of direction became a bit more stabilized. In the end, I was able to plan the development of new consoles.

The current New Console Development Department was analyzing the current specs of the devices on the market and an elite engineer, who had developed the original Family console, was assigned to work with me.

In other words, I was able to take on a position as the director of the New Console Development Department that would allow me to poach core engineering talents. If I was playing poker with President Yamauchi, Mr. Gunpei, and Mr. Shigeru, the cards in my hand would be comparable to a royal straight.

“What do you think? Do you like my proposal? You could set up a new company similar to this one with that money, President Kudo.”

“O-Okay. If it's that much, I will hand over my Triangle Soft to

you, Mr. Kang.”

“Ah~ but I have one condition.”

“Con-Condition?”

Looking at President Kudo’s face, that immediately turned white from my one comment, I could see that his accumulated stress was not something to joke about. I gave a slight smile towards him and opened my mouth:

“Would you like to go on a vacation out of the country after finishing the paperwork? Mmm~ How about one year? Ah, of course I’ll pay for the travel fees.”

“W-What’s this about traveling...?”

“You know what a Kagemusha is, right? President Kudo, you would have to be registered as a ghost president for about a year...”[2]

Shadow Warrior.

It was a term referring to the Edo era when substitutes for authoritative figures, who donned the exact attires and had similar facial features, were put in the original person’s place to prevent assassinations from the enemy. For example, it did not matter if a company that was started by a Japanese was handed over to a foreigner.

It was just that I could buy it with money after my residency period of 5 years.

January of 1987.

I cleared the Triangle Soft's office free from the littered boxes and a new name for the company was hung at the front of the office.

-Pentagon Soft-

From the original Triangle to the making of a 5-sided figure by drawing two more dots, I changed the name to Pentagon to reflect that. I shook away the dust on my hands, and I proudly looked at the new company name that was neatly hung up.

'I paid for his unpaid wages, so he should be showing up by now?'

At that moment, a voice of a man sounded behind my back.

"Who... are you?"

As I turned my head, the question-filled face of Mr. Kawaguchi was staring back at me.

"Oh? Are you perhaps the Mintendo employee that I met from Dragon Warrior's event?"

“Hello, Mr. Kawaguchi.”

“Why are you...?”

“I came here to give technical support. Trian... no. I came here to give help to Pentagon Soft’s new project.”

“Is President Kudo inside?”

“Ah~ the president said he would be leaving for a hiatus overseas... Mr. Kawaguchi, we are essentially alone.”

President Kudo took care of his debt with the funds that I wired to him and after completing the necessary documents with an attorney, he left for a vacation to Europe.

“What did you say??”

“So you’ll temporarily be in charge of this Pentagon Soft, Mr. Kawaguchi.”

“Me...?”

Mr. Kawaguchi stared at me with an incredulous expression. As I lightly pushed the office door open and went inside, Mr. Kawaguchi, who was following behind me, turned his tongue after seeing the renovated interior.

“Is this really Triangle Soft?”

“No, this is Pentagon Soft now. Instead of a hierarchy with an emphasis for authority, it’s now a place where all of the employees can gather at the respective edges of the Pentagon and collectively discuss ideas to make the greatest game possible. Of course, the main director that’ll temporarily be in charge will be you, Mr. Kawaguchi.”

“When will President Kudo come back?”

“It should be for a fairly long time... About one year? Or would it be a little longer than that?”

“I just came here to see if the company situation got better after my overdue wages were paid...”

“The malicious inventory has been cleared off. There should be plenty of potential to develop a new game. What do you think? The fantasy game that you were developing as your last title... what do you say about developing that game here? I will also give my all, and I will help you out.”

“Final... Frontier.”

“Excuse me?”

“The title of the new game will be Final Frontier. As a game developer, I will pour my soul into this final effort.”

Final Frontier.

This was the birthplace of the masterpiece of an era that any gamer would remember.

End of Volume 1



# Volume 02

## Chapter 27 : Strange Game (1)

---

Afterwards, I hurriedly worked on the completion of Final Frontier with Kawaguchi. Of course, I couldn't visit every day as the office was located in Tokyo, but I made sure to visit at least once on my business trips there.

After Kawaguchi played the Dragon Warrior that I lent to him, he seemed to make a breakthrough.

In this era, game developers didn't pay much attention to BGM (Background Music), but Mr. Kawaguchi realized that the BGM played a vital role to dramatize and increase the enjoyability of the game.

Just like how the BGM of Dragon Warrior gave off a majestic atmosphere as soon as the game was turned on, Final Frontier also wanted to exude a dream-like feeling to the players.

And the music that flowed out of the field scenes wanted to provide an atmosphere where one would be indirectly put on an epic worldwide adventure.

In the midst of everything, Mr. Kawaguchi hired a professional music composer from a fantasy movie and shockingly, that composer was a classic. And a piano major on top of that.

Toriyama Akira, who had gained massive popularity with the children, had appointed the popular 'The Five Eagle Brothers' to use as the illustration.

“I can guess the age group you’re aiming at, Mr. Kawaguchi.”

I, who was inspecting the blueprints of Final Frontier, looked toward Mr. Kawaguchi and gave a slight smile.

“Is it too obvious that we’re copying elements from Dragon Warrior?”

“It’s not a bad tactic. If Dragon Warrior was a pure story that conveyed hopes and dreams to children, the target age group should be a little higher with around high school to adult preferences.”

“That is exactly correct. I fleshed out the battle scenes with the intent to convey the feeling of fighting against an actual enemy, what do you think? I was watching NFL (American Football), and the sheer amount of tension felt from the players before the quarterback passed the ball was tremendous.”

“Tension... Simply making the character face off against an enemy wouldn’t necessarily maximize the tension of battle...”

“That’s why I planned out the battle system like this.”

The battle between monsters, that Mr. Kawaguchi showed, utilized a system called the Active Battle System.

A gauge was implemented to take turns between the actions of the monster and the player. Then, following the order that each of the gauges were filled up, the monster and the player would take turns attacking each other and this would set the foundation for the miraculous battle system for Final Frontier.

“Mr. Junhyuk, I was curious about this before, but you seem to possess an incredibly profound knowledge of game planning and programming. Thanks to you, the production of Final Frontier went very smoothly.”

“Really? It’s a relief that I was able to be of assistance to you.”

“With a skill level like yours, it can be comparable to Mr. Shigeru of Nintendo. Why haven’t you developed a game yourself?”

“Mmm... Actually, I’m currently making a game as a hobby.”

“Developing a game as a hobby? Just what type of game is it?”

“It’s a secret for now, so it would be difficult for me to say. Haha.”

I flashed a smile towards Mr. Kawaguchi and avoided giving the answer. The game that I had been developing ever since I came back from the States early last year was nearing completion.

However, the thing that was clear to me was that I had no intention of releasing this game under Nintendo’s name.

—

One day in the spring of 1987...

The game called Final Frontier was released without any media attention.

At first, no one had paid any attention to the story of a warrior defeating darkness with the support of the crystal.

One week after the release of the game, with the help of Yamano Yoshitaka's illustrations, 3000 copies of Final Frontier were sold. Of course, this was a satisfying result compared to the sales of the previous title, 'King's Quest'. However, Mr. Kawaguchi's heart did not seem to feel that way.

A somber voice could be heard from the other side of the telephone. I was also busy at the headquarters so I couldn't make frequent business trips to Tokyo; I was speaking with Mr. Kawaguchi over the phone in my dormitory after work.

"Only one week has passed, I don't think there is any reason for you to be depressed like that. There will be a review on the FamiTong magazine this month, so please wait a little bit more."

"Thank you for supporting me all the way through to the end with this final game that I prepared. Mr. Kang, I will never forget this debt."

“You’ve been through a lot while preparing for the game’s release. Please take a good rest for the next few days and relax your mind.”

“I was planning on going fishing at a beach for a few days anyways.”

“That’s a great idea. You might be able to hear the good news after you come back from a faraway beach~”

“I wouldn’t have any more wishes if that came true. Then, I will contact you again after I return.”

As soon as Mr. Kawaguchi hung up the call, I contacted the FamiTong reporter, Junpei.

Due to me giving him the information about the golden cartridge beforehand, he became one of my closest friends.

In this period with no internet, the only source of information about games were through magazines. On top of that, the marketing methods for games had to be done through the same method. A while later, a voice of a man, along with the sound of a punching bag being hit, could be heard on the receiving end of the telephone.

“Thank you. This is FamiTong’s Ishimoto Junpei.”

“Is that you Junpei? So you haven’t got off work yet?”

Junpei, who was the same age as me, had a habit of speaking rapidly as if he was being chased. Due to this, there were many occasions where you would not understand his words very well if you didn’t give him your full attention.

“The deadline will be the end of me. There is a mountain of games to play; how am I supposed to review everything? I’m about to go insane.”

“You’re really busy. By the way, did the review for Final Frontier — that was released ten days ago — come out yet?”

“Final Frontier? Hmm... I’m not the only one that writes reviews. Wouldn’t another person have written a review?”

“What do you mean by ‘wouldn’t another person have written a review?’... What kind of answer is that?”

“Did you know? The recent games that are coming out for the Family number in twos or threes. Even if there were three clones of me, I would still be short handed. I’m telling you, I’m at a point where I’m desperate enough to borrow a cat’s paws.”

“It doesn’t matter if a cat or a dog writes the review, can you check if the review for Final Frontier started the publication process?”

“Now?”

“Yup. Now.”

“Hey, hey. Please let me off~ Mn? I haven’t went home for the past two days~”

“Oh, oh... So quickly check it for me, then go home and rest after~”

“Toxic bastard.”

“Thanks for the compliment.”

A moment later, the sound of Junpei shouting to the other employees about whether anyone started writing a review for Final Frontier was heard. A brief moment later:

“No. No one said they were writing it? There were a ton of games released this time so the review for Final Frontier will have to be pushed to next month.”

“What!? Hey, if you push a review for a new title released this month to the next, what kind of a game magazine are you?”

“If only there were one or two newly released games. Thankfully, I’m a reviewer. However, the kids at the game marketing team are no different than half corpses. They haven’t gone home for two



weeks and were stuck playing games.”

“Then you should write the review for Final Frontier yourself. Also, do everything you can to release that review for this month’s edition.”

“Oing? What did you say!?”

“You owe me one from that The Legend of Karin’s limited edition article being a massive hit, right? Just think of it as you repaying the debt.”

“Hey Junhyuk, no matter how... That’s a little...”

“I’m pleading with you, Junpei. We’re friends~ Mn?”

“Ah~ I was determined to go home today but...?”

“But just try playing the game. It should be enjoyable since I’m the one recommending it.”

“I will give it a go right now because you’re asking me, but if it’s a trash game, just know that you will die by my hands~!!”

“I’ll buy the drinks after your deadline is over so give it your best~!!?”

“G-Great? Yeah, alright. You have to keep that promise~!!”

“Got that, bastard~ Break a leg.”

One week had passed. I visited a big book store in Osaka. In the magazine section, male students wearing school uniforms made a line and read the FamiTong Magazine.

“Wow~ Tons of new titles also came out this time around. I’ve used up my allowance, but what should I buy?”

“Buy something that you can play for a long time. Like an RPG~”

“I’ve already beat Dragon Warrior 2 last week, and it was definitely enjoyable... But the plot was a bit immature... Is there something from the newly released titles?”

In response, one student, who was reading the review article beside him, answered:

“Final Frontier... This seems quite good? Reviewer Junpei, the RPG professional, had given it 36 out of 40.”

“Really? Dragon Warrior was 38 points.”

As the interest of the students were perked, the male student started reading the review article out loud to them.

“Final Frontier — the first project from the new company, Pentagon Soft. The plot is about the main character, a warrior of light, who received support from a crystal and defeats the forces of darkness alone. The game gives off a similar impression to Dragon Warrior 1 with its beautiful BGM and the illustrations of Yoshitaka, but a unique battle system specific to Final Frontier gets introduced. I could feel a new type of attraction from the fantasy genre that was different from what Dragon Warrior exudes.”

“It’s strange? Is it saying Final Frontier is a subtype of Dragon Warrior?”

“They’re saying the battle system is interesting. The review score is good so I think it’s worth a shot?”

“Mmm~ This is making me think. First of all, I’ll have to go to a game shop owner and ask if it is an entertaining game.”

At that moment, one student, who was listening to the other students speak, opened his mouth with a cautious expression.

“You guys... Do you know a game called Dragon Emblem?”

At that instant, my hands, that were browsing the bookshelves next to them, also froze.

“Dragon Emblem? What’s that, it’s the first time I’ve heard of it.”

“Yeah, who made it? Is it also an RPG game?”

The student was overwhelmed by the barrage of questions from his friends and made a slight expression of contemplation. He took his time to decide on the potential words that were circling behind his lips. Then, he opened his mouth with a lack of self confidence:

“N-No. It’s fine if you don’t know about it.”

“What~ You’re keeping secrets? Just what type of game is it?”

“Yeah~ If it’s entertaining, tell us so we can play together~”

A human could not control himself if he was curious. The student who said something and dropped it in the middle of saying it couldn’t withstand the barrage of questions from his friends. Finally, he gave in and opened his mouth:

“Actually, I heard this from my older cousin. I got the call yesterday, but he bragged a lot claiming he got a hold of an incredible game. Aside from that, I don’t know much either...”

“If a game has been released, it would be in the magazine. When did it come out?”

“I don’t know... It’s a rumour that’s floating around like an urban legend, but apparently, that game did not have a release date...”

## Chapter 28 : Strange Game (2)

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I, who was leisurely browsing the bookshelves, let out a smirk after I heard that comment from the student.

‘Mmm~ Well, he’s not totally wrong I guess.’

As if the curiosity of the other students were perked him, they started to barrage him with even more questions. One student looked around the bookstore and inspected the games released for the Family.

“There’s no game like that here?”

“I told you already that it wasn’t officially released...”

“What the hell do you mean? Then how did your cousin get a hold of an unreleased game?”

“That’s... He said he bought it at a second hand store?”

“He bought an unreleased game from a second hand store!? Just what kind of game is it? What’s the genre?”

“My cousin said that it was a new genre that he’d never seen before. The theme is a fantasy setting, but the characters inside the screen are standing on top of some kind of chessboard map. You’re suppose to move the characters around to fight the enemy. The

problem is...”

“The problem...?”

“He says that the data inside the game will restart when his character dies...”

“What? What are you talking about?? You’re saying that if a character dies, then it’s gone forever?”

“Yeah...”

In response, one student, who was listening to the story, scoffed and remarked:

“Then you can just turn the device off and on or load back into a checkpoint.”

“Apparently that specific character disappears even after a load...”

“What did you say!? Then how about starting from the beginning?”

“That’s not possible either. If all of the characters are dead, it’s game over. And the game is unplayable after that.”

“Crazy f\*cking... Who’s the developer? They’re making money off of a game like this? They should be protested against.”

“He said that there were no mentions of the developers, so there was no customer center to complain to. Like I’ve said before, that game was bought in a second hand store in its bare disk form without the cartridge. Plus, its price might seem peculiar; he said it was 1000 Yen...”

“1000 Yen? It’s that cheap? No way. Is your cousin a liar?”

“He’s not that type of person. Anyways, he lost all of his characters and suffered a game over... So recently, he has been going around the second hand stores to search for a game named Dragon Emblem...”

“Phew~ That’s amazing. Perhaps we should search for that game too?”

Soon after the students stormed out of the bookstore, the store owner shouted in a loud voice to them:

“You rascals!! A book store is a place of serenity!!”

As soon as I stepped out of the bookstore, I watched the students running through the streets and closed my book. The mystical game that not anyone could play: Dragon Emblem...

The student’s explanation from a while ago was pretty accurate.

This game that required you to move your characters in a fantasy setting and fighting the enemies within would be called a simulation RPG genre in the future.

The title named Dragon Emblem was my first ever creation after the time slip. And... it currently boasted the highest difficulty in the history of games.

Of course, I made it so that it was possible to beat the game. However, it was impossible to clear the game on the first try. As soon as one character died, Dragon Emblem would turn into a game that would be impossible to beat...

I was able to distribute this to the market without going through Nintendo's cartridge production factory. How was that possible?

First of all, I didn't utilize the standard supply chain. Like the student said before, I passed this game to the second hand stores at a base price of 500 Yen per unit, which was more economical compared to other games.

And the shops would double the base price into 1000 Yen and sell it to the customers.

In the weekends, I sold 2~3 cartridges to each of the bustling game shops in the middle of Osaka. After spreading about 200 units of the title, I quietly waited for the word of mouth to go around.



There was no need to hurry. I was also busy working. Once in awhile, I would visit these shops and check if any copies of Dragon Emblems were sold, but other than that, I payed no attention.

The result of slowly spreading Dragon Emblem between the places was... A strange urban legend that started to go around.

-A fantasy game that boasted a satan level difficulty...-

On the weekends, I sold the slowly gathered cartridges to second hand game shops. If someone asked how I got my hands on a Mintendo game cartridge... You didn't think I threw away all of the unsold products of Triangle Soft, did you?

—

Starting with the reputation that Junpei brought, Final Frontier was starting to receive great responses from the players. Junpei was one of the most respected reviewers that the players listened to. No matter how spectacular a prequel to a game was, he critiqued what needed to be critiqued so he didn't even give Dragon Warrior 2 a perfect score.

As a person like that gave a 36/40 review score to this new game, it piqued the interest of players and caused them to buy the game. As a result, the responses were immensely positive.

The Final Frontier that had sold 3,000 units in the first week,

after being publicized in the FamiTong, sold over 30,000 units every week after one month had passed. Mr. Kawaguchi, who had returned from his fishing hiatus to the ocean, called in with a shaking voice at this unbelievable situation.

“Mr. Kang, what is going on?”

“That’s why I told you to have a little more patience. A good game will definitely be recognized by the players~ The word of mouth has started to go around, so it should sell like the speed after a sail is holstered onto a boat. You should also send a request to Mintendo before the stock runs out.”

“Thank you very much. Please stop by my office when you visit Tokyo, I have many things that I want to discuss with you, Mr. Kang.”

“Alright. I’ll contact you before I visit.”

He was like a deadbeat man a half-step away from the gates of hell before he left for fishing; now, he’s overzealous to the extreme... I shook my head left and right and put down the receiver. At that moment, the telephone rang with a loud racket.

“Hello...?”

“Junhyuk!? It’s me, Junpei. Are you off work yet?”

“I answered your call because I’m off work...”

“Then come to Osaka.”

“Osaka!? You’re here in Osaka right now? When??”

“Just now. You told me that you would take me someplace nice last time~ Quickly pop out here. I, your older brother, will be waiting.”

“You travelled all the way from Tokyo just to get a meal off of me!?”

“I have something to ask you about this month’s article; I need your help this time.”

“Alright. I’ll be there in a moment.”

A brief moment later.

I rode my car and arrived at Dotonbori, Osaka and looked around at the meeting place. I could meet him easily if I had a cellphone... Although there were some uncomfortable moments like these in the 80s, there were other times where a profound sense of uniqueness could be felt...

“Oii~ Here, I’m over here!!”

As I turned my head to Junpei’s voice, I saw the scene of him

waving at me while wearing a hat. Who said he wasn't a reporter? The bastard was walking over to me with a professional film camera that was holstered on his shoulders. He approached me and spoke:

“It's been a while. How have you been?”

“Well~ so-so. You should've gave me a call before you came to Osaka.”

“Then you would run away with the excuse of having work to do.”

“... Quick-witted bastard.”

“Keke. Let's find something to eat, first. You said you're paying today, right? Should I embrace myself with the storm of Osaka and eat myself to death today~?”

“Alright, alright~”

Dotonbori was recently formed and a popular place of entertainment. It was located around the Dotonbori river which ran from the north.

Located at the 500m road between Ebisubashi to Senichi, Dotonbori hosted popular stores, restaurants, and flashing ostentatious signs that were hung all over the place like a complicated tetris game.

The bastard, Junpei, chased after me with a yakitori in his mouth saying that he must eat it every time in Osaka.

“Ah~ hot~!! Hah~ Haht~!!?”

“You would come to your senses after burning your mouth...”

I shook my head and smirked at the scene of Junpei rolling the yakitori around his mouth.

Since I came here, aside from Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru, I did not have very many people around my age that I would call my friends.

Should I say that this bastard was one friend that I could freely speak my heart to?

After a while, we arrived at a sushi restaurant with a unique crab sign and rented a room inside the restaurant.

“Was the nice place that you talked about... here?”

“Why? You don’t like it? Wanna go somewhere else??”

“Nah... I must’ve been possessed by a confused ghost for a brief moment. Of course...”

“Man. You probably ran over here anticipating that I would take you to a strip club...”

“Shut up~!! I work everyday so I don’t have time to meet a girl.”

“What, you think I’m eating and playing every day?”

As I slowly lifted the shot glass, Junpei clanked his cup against mine with an unsatisfied expression. In the midst of filling our stomach with sashimi and talking about recent game industry happenings, Junpei laid his chopsticks down at the table and wore a serious expression on his face.

“Actually, the reason I visited was to personally ask you a question.”

“Yeah?”

As I half-heartedly responded and grabbed a piece of sashimi, Junpei slightly crinkled his face.

“Alright. I’ll pay attention, what is it?”

“Do you perhaps know about a game called Dragon Emblem?”

What, it was about this? I swallowed my laughter inside and answered.

“Yeah, I know about it. Why? Are you also interested in that game?”

“My job is a reporter for a game magazine, why would I not be interested? But, have you played it before?”

“Yup, I played it.”

“What? Where did you find it!?”

“I bought it from a second hand game store like the rumors said.”

“What game store was it? Please tell me.”

“It’s a place in Kyoto, but we can’t go there right now. We’ve even drank... and there was only one copy left when I bought it. I was lucky...”

“The rumors were true after all!! It would appear at Kyoto or Osaka rather than Tokyo!!”

That was because I live here, so it was obvious that I would spread it near me...

“But was that game especially expensive? I bought it at 8,000 Yen from the second hand game store. I heard that it was 1,000 Yen from the rumors...”

“It’s glaringly obvious that the price would rise~!! That game is an incredibly hot topic amongst the Family game maniacs.”

Like Junpei had said, Dragon Emblem that sold in the beginning for 500 Yen was now going for around 6,000 Yen. Of course, it was for the brand new copies that did not have the game data deleted...

After emptying the shot glass down into my throat, I took out a game cartridge from inside my jacket. Subsequently, Junpei’s eyes widened like a circle and opened his mouth.

“Uh...? You... that, you...”

“I knew you would ask about this, so I acquired another copy a couple of days ago.”

Even though I actually brought this copy that was laying around my house...

“Junhyuk~!! You bastard~ Aaooohh!! You lovely object!!”



## Chapter 29 : Strange Game (3)

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Junpei had been so deeply moved that tears started to well up in his eyes. He carefully held onto the Dragon Emblem that I had given him. With a child-like curiosity, Junpei intently studied the outer appearance of the family cartridge, even though there was nothing different about it when compared to regular cartridges.

“You’ll burn a hole through the cartridge with that stare of yours you rascal. Enough, let’s drink.”

“I simply asked you on a whim and didn’t have any hope. And now, I’m just ecstatic because I get to see it in person!!”

“It’s fine. You’ll probably hate me for it in around three days...”

“Hm? Why?”

“They say there hasn’t been a single person to have cleared that game yet. Or rather, it’s more accurate to say that, as of yet, there hasn’t been such a person. Your temper really flares up when you can’t clear a game after all.”

“You’re saying that the rumors about losing all of your data after your character dies is actually true?”

“It’s even worse. Once you hit ‘Game Over’, it becomes an unplayable game. So, do your best and try playing it seriously.”

Truthfully, Dragon Emblem had a secret that no one but myself knew.

Well, I'm sure it would be discovered sooner or later but, as of now, the only person who knew of this was myself. Wanting to observe and enjoy the reactions of the players even more, I filled the glass up to the brim with alcohol and made a grin on my face.

—

“Who exactly sold the cartridges without our permission?!”

President Yamauchi growled out loudly in anger during this weekly meeting.

“We shouldn't jump to conclusions. After all, I've heard that recently, China's been rampant with cases of illegal reproduction operations.”

“Of game cartridges?! Are you even listening to yourself??”

And Mr. Shige, who had been staring blankly into space for a while now, suddenly spoke up.

“He's right. To go through the trouble of illegally producing something like game cartridges... Even if it was to create an excellent game, it just doesn't make sense. Ah~ my Katrina...”

“Shige... Why has that bastard been acting that way?”

President Yamauchi looked at Mr. Shige, who had been uncomfortably courting a hazy and forlorn expression for a while now.

I, who had been sitting beside Mr. Shige, jabbed him in the ribs and answered President Yamauchi for him.

“Ah, that’s... the princess of the ‘Dragon Emblem’ game that Mr. Shige had been playing died.”

“I placed her in the rear to protect here until the end, but to think that the army would flank me like that... What kind of a demon-like director made such a cruel design...”

As if remembering yesterday’s events, Mr. Shige mumbled quietly in a depressed manner.

Hah~ please come to your senses, won’t you? However, it still gave me a satisfying feeling to see a famous director like Mr. Shige being deeply engrossed in the game play...

“However, because Dragon Emblem had been established through illegal means, there was no way of knowing or tracking who built it. Although, I’m guessing that an amateur didn’t make this game...”

“I don’t want to know who made Dragon Emblem. What I want

to know is how a game is being distributed in the market, yet not paying royalties to us!”

President Yamauchi shouted as if he had truly gone senile from the anger.

In the office, aside from Mr. Gunpei, Mr. Shige, and myself, the manager of the cartridge production factory and the head of the security team were also currently present.

‘But as the head of the next generation game console development department, why do I even need to be here...?’

It had been two months since I had first introduced ‘Dragon Emblem’ to various second-hand game stores.

At first, Mr. Shige and Mr. Gunpei, who had heard of the rumor for the first time, passed it off as an urban legend. However, as the increasing number of players began inquiring Nintendo about who the developer was, market inspections were initiated. After inspecting several second-hand game stores, they were able to draw a conclusion; they were finally able to believe in the existence of Dragon Emblem.

As of now, the one deemed as the best in Japan’s game development was Mr. Shige. The same Mr. Shige who, having had his interest moved, searched over the span of many days to eventually have the game, Dragon Emblem, fall into his hands.

However, upon reaching the 5th stage, the atrocious difficulty had annihilated all of the characters. The Dragon Emblem game, which he barely managed to find, was only played for a day, before it became an impossibility to complete, and was thrown away.

“But this game has a peculiarity about it.”

Eventually, as Mr. Shige snapped out of his contemplative stupor and opened his mouth, the gazes of all the employees in the office were directed towards him.

“The Dragon Emblem that I’ve experienced... it was like a survival game where the players were almost being driven into a corner. Once you reach ‘Game Over’, the game is unplayable. However, after the game is finished and you re-insert the cartridge, a message will appear.”

“A message?”

“hkjo615@raon.co.kr — what exactly could this mean? Also, there was a message that pops up saying to never throw the game away. A <To Be Continued> was also displayed at the end. In other words, it’s implying that there’s more to come. In any case, the alphabet code seems like a type of password to use in the sequel. The clues made it so that if you were to throw it away, you’d still easily be able to sell it to second-hand stores. Although we don’t know who it is, this developer gives off the feeling of an incredible marketing genius who is also well-versed in the game industry.”

At that moment, Mr. Gunpei muttered the series of letters that

Mr. Shige presented and opened his mouth.

“That... seems like an email address?”

As expected of Mintendo’s most elite. Having the knowledge of what the form of an Email address looked like in 1987... Just thinking about that was sending shivers down my spine. As of yet, the internet, which was still being referred to as a ‘communication network’ exclusive to the army, was something that nobody who was a civilian in this time should have the knowledge of... Or so I had thought. Was it possible that Mr. Gunpei had come from the future as well...?

“Email? Does Mr. Gunpei know what this alphabet code means?”

“No... I don’t understand it to that extent. All I know is that it’s a form of communication and an identifier that works roughly the same as a house address. However, it would be difficult — in any case — to understand the underlying message by just knowing what it is, wouldn’t you agree?”

Kaah~ Look at that comparison. I can’t stop complimenting him... It was enough for me to spit out a compliment inside my mind, but no one in this meeting was able to understand Mr. Gunpei’s words.

“Communication? House address? Mr. Gunpei... I wouldn’t understand it because I only make games. Can you please explain it in a way that will make sense...?”

Mmm... Was it possible to explain it any simpler than that? With an impatient expression, I responded to Mr. Shige in place of Mr. Gunpei.

“Mr. Shige, you have a phone in your house, right?”

“Of course. Is there anyone in this day and age that doesn’t?”

“A telephone is a communication device. One that allows you to have a conversation with a person over a long distance, right?”

“That’s... right?”

“What Mr. Gunpei is trying to say is that the series of alphabet letters are similar to a phone number. We can send an electronic mail to a faraway person through the computer.”

“That’s right!! Kang-kun!! That’s what I have been trying to say~! As expected of Kang-kun, I had a feeling that he’d be able to explain~”

In my perspective, you, who already had the knowledge of what an Email was, should be considered a far scarier ‘monster’ than me... At that moment, President Yamauchi closed his eyes and, after Mr. Shige’s comment, asked:

“Grunt... Anyways, the conclusion is that a sequel could come out for this game, yes? It’s terrifying to even think about that. Shigeru-kun, how much did you say that game cost?”

“Um... the price began at 1000 Yen in the beginning, but now it has soared to almost 15,000 Yen, which makes sense given the quality of the game and the demand there is for it. Also, the fact that the game has yet to be cleared gives the users a sense of excitement. The reason for that seems to be the shocking rarity of the game.”

“We don’t know where this guy came from, but if I meet him just a single time, I’m willing to spend a million dollars if necessary. A producer who can utilise such psychological tactics on the masses...”

Even though this was only the beginning... President Yamauchi seemed to be sporting a strange emotion as Mr. Gunpei opened his mouth to speak again.

“I don’t know as much about games compared to Mr. Shigeru or Kang-kun, but upon hearing Mr. Shigeru speak, I couldn’t help but notice a very strange point.”

“Strange you say?”

“Yes. The cartridges we make are called ROM packs. Ah, President Yamauchi, a ROM pack is...”

Wearing an impatient expression, President Yamauchi quickly interrupted Mr. Gunpei before he could go any further in his explanation.



“Hey, skip past that over-explaining habit of yours and just tell me the main point.”

“I can’t, even if I wanted to. This is one of those things where you need to hear the long explanation to understand properly. ROM stands for Read-Only-Memory — a type of memory that is only able to be read from. To my knowledge, the ROM makes it so that if you were to ever use a different set of data, it would become unusable.”

The second Mr. Gunpei said those words, the pencil I had been twirling about in my hand paused. Hm...?

“Shigeru-kun. By any chance, do you have that Dragon Emblem game on you right now?”

“Yes, it’s sitting at the development office. Actually, I had wanted to crack open the game, but there’s an absurdly strong lock on the system...”

“Is that so. In that case, can you show it to me for a bit after the conference ends? It seems like I’ll need to see the cartridge.”

In the end, the conference meeting ended without any of us having found a solution to the problem. At the end, President Yamauchi imparted onto us one last sentence.

-Make a game similar to that of Dragon Emblem and formally

circulate it-

This was basically an order telling us to create a charming, marketable SRPG genre game in the shortest term possible.

However, a game like Dragon Emblem — with such advocated recognition — was, from my perspective, something only Mr. Shige could match. So, with President Yamauchi's development instructions, he set off to work. As for myself... Lately, I've been too busy with the production of a brand new console so it had been hard to find time to continue my company outsourcing tangents.

In the end, we at Mintendo had to partner up with one of our most loyal firms, Intelilic, and they took the helm for the new Emblem series.

A game idea that I originally had hadn't been used by my previous company... Now, the story is flowing in an... interesting way?

A moment later, Mr. Shige, Mr. Gunpei, and I were sitting at the office and looking at the game cartridge of Dragon Emblem. Listening to Mr. Gunpei, it seemed like the secret of Dragon Emblem, that only I had known for a while, would be released to the public.

Taking out the ROM card from the game cartridge and revealing its appearance, Mr. Shige tilted his head in confusion and asked Mr. Gunpei.

“Is there something peculiar about it?”

Going as far as to break into a cold sweat, Mr. Gunpei grumbled.

“Shigeru-kun. You said that this game cost 1000 Yen at the second hand shop?”

“Mmm... the rumours are going around saying so. Although, a premium price tag is now put on it...”

“Now, which crazy bastard would hand over an item like this for a measly 1000 Yen for the second-hand stores to sell?”

“Why? Is there something special about it?”

“With other games, you would make the game cartridge and insert a different chip. However, Dragon Emblem’s cartridge is made entirely exclusive to it!”

“Hah~ So you’re saying that there’s a game inside the game? But according to Mr. Gunpei, isn’t it impossible to delete data inside a ROM cartridge?”

“It was changed to be able to cleverly read data. It’s limited to not only the basic games, but the data on the custom chip as well.”

## Chapter 30 : Strange Game (4)

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“Custom chip? What’s that?”

“It’s an apparatus that can read and write data... It can also freely manipulate up to 24 kb of storage at will. Yes, with this method, it’s possible to delete data as a result of the game play. However, I can’t comprehend what the intent was for implementing this setting to a perfected game...”

Mr. Gunpei was making a depressed expression while staring at the internal chip.

Mmm... Actually, I didn’t have any particular intentions? If he had to ask about the intent, then I guess it would be that I wanted to convey the realism of losing a character to the gamers. (This was confirmed by the reaction of Mr. Shigeru losing Katrina.) And also to provide a competitive spirit for gamers attempting to clear a game with an extremely high difficulty?

With the current ROM technology, it was currently impossible to make this kind of game; a game that would delete characters or game data depending on the gameplay. After contemplating for a while, I suddenly thought of the ROM pack that I had seen once at Yongsan district.[1]

This oftenly dubbed ‘UFO’ was a device that could make copies of game cartridges.

By plugging a custom game disk inside the UFO device, and the

game you would like to copy in the back, the data inside the game would be copied onto the custom game disk. This could be seen as the beginning of illegal ROM pack copies.

The interesting thing was, I wanted to know if it was currently possible to move multiple games onto the disk, so I met one man through the Game & Watch system. An indian man called Chand...

In one alleyway on the crowded streets of Akihabara, he was selling PC accessories in a computer store, but this was just a cover. In reality, inside the store, he was selling illegal copies of Family games.

I hovered around his surroundings for a few days while waiting for the perfect opportunity to step on his tail. Then, I finally caught him in the critical moment of an illegal sale. I successfully got a hold of his weakness by threatening him that I would report him to the police.

What happened next? Well that's obvious... I made the indian native, who was in charge of providing the initial custom chip cartridges, work for me.

Chand and his buddies were uncooperative in the beginning, but after I showed them that more money could be made by helping me instead of selling illegal copies, things worked out easily. Due to that, the initial start-up capital was quite high; the profits finally started trickling in after the price of the item rose even more, thanks to its rarity.

“I can finally understand why Dragon Emblem introduced itself through the cracks of the unofficial second-hand market.”

Mr. Gunpei made a satisfied face as if he was relieved of his curiosity. Now, Mr. Shigeru was wearing a strange expression, one that was different from when he was developing Super Marigee.

“I don’t understand at all. Why is a game of this caliber not going through the official route, Mr. Gunpei?”

“Because Dragon Emblem would lose its uniqueness if it officially debuted like every other game. Think about it, wouldn’t the official price be fixed if it were to be subsidized by us? Just the custom chip alone is worth 8,000 Yen.

Our Mintendo is setting the maximum price per game at 6,000 Yen per cartridge in order to protect our consumers. We would have experienced an enormous deficit if it was sold with this custom chip installed...

And it would’ve been difficult for it to experience the current rarity value. They must’ve aimed for the price-malleable black market for this reason. Dragon Emblem is a game that perfectly drilled through the holes of our Mintendo’s cartridge production system...”

—

There was a very interesting thing that happened in this month’s

FamiTong magazine.

It gathered the gamers that had already played Dragon Emblem to launch an attack. What was the name of the event? That... Was it called 'Final round'? As a memorandum was opened for strategies on how to clear all 25 stages of Dragon Emblem, the players expressed interest in joining this event. And to analyze the reactions of these players, Mr. Shige and I went out as the representatives of Mintendo.

"I've been in game development for five years already, but this is the first time I'm seeing a strange event such as this."

Mr. Shige muttered as his breakfast was replaced by the convenience store's bread and milk. Beside him, I was wearing a proud smile as I looked around.

Each of the players who came sat down in front of a prepared monitor with contemplative looks on their faces. FamiTong had prepared 100 copies of Dragon Emblem for this event... This was the ultimate event that was made possible by wiping the entire nation's black market clean; it was in order for the 100 players, including Mr. Shige and I, to try and clear Dragon Emblem together.

The players gathered were mostly male, but there were a sparse number of female players here and there. Would the ratio be about 9:1? But in this day and age, female gamers were a national treasure, so it was normal for the gazes of many men to be focused on one female body.

“Hello and welcome~ to all of the players. I’m FamiTong’s reporter, Ishimoto Junpei, and I will be the host for today’s beehive convention.”

A beehive convention... The naming sure was creative...

“All of you are considered the warriors amongst warriors for having tried your hands in defeating Dragon Emblem, but we will announce some information about the game — just in case — before we get started. First~!! Look over here!!”

As Junpei pointed at the wall inside the convention auditorium, basic information about the game popped up.

“The company that developed Dragon Emblem is still shrouded in mystery. It’s highly probable that they would reveal themselves after someone clears this game, so we will be able to solve the puzzle behind the makers of this game~!!”

“Wooaah!!!!!!”

The morale of the soldiers, who were determined to defeat the Demon King known as ‘Dragon Emblem’, was incredibly high. The scene of the few female players shouting at the top of their lungs was truly a sight to behold, and made one wonder if they had sold their souls to the devil.

Of course, by initially buying a copy at 1000 Yen then later



buying it for 20,000 Yen yet still not being able to clear it, this would be the precursor to selling one's soul to the devil... I smirked and joined in with the roaring.

Junpei looked around and floated a satisfied grin on his face before he continued explaining.

“Everyone, imagine this in your head... I've purchased 5 copies of this game. The furthest I've gotten was stage 19 before I was forced on my knees by the Black Earth Dragon. The first copy out of the 5 was given to me by a friend, which I then started playing. However, the 4 copies after that were purchased for a total of 70,000 Yen by me. And I believe you've all spent a similar amount as well.”

“I've spent 200,000!!!”

As one player earnestly burst out with a frustrated voice, Junpei smirked and replied.

“Then I don't think there is much of a gaming talent on your side?”

The red-faced player firmly closed his mouth, but the atmosphere turned into a sea of laughter.

Taking a look at Japanese people performing TV shows based on arts, backstabbing the guest performers and just mocking people in general was the norm. I was wondering if mocking people was a

unique culture of the Japanese.

“Now~ everyone calm down. Like the person that spoke a moment ago, there are a few who don’t have any in-depth knowledge of the game, so I’ll give an overview. Everyone here must at least know a character that dies in-game will be deleted from the data forever, so I’ll skip this part and explain the relationships between the class systems.

Spearmen are effective against the swordsmen, and the swordsmen are effective against the knights. In turn, the knights are effective against the spearmen, so it’s referencing the rock paper scissor game. Archers are able to attack at a range of 2 units away and are effective against Dragon Warriors. However, be careful because their defenses are low.

Dragon Warriors are able to make super effective attacks on all classes, but they are extremely vulnerable to arrows. I’ll stop explaining now, just remember this and everyone try their best! We can definitely see the end of this game together~!!”

“Wooooaahhh!!!!!!”

“And to the player that manages to clear the game, we’ve prepared a 100,000 Yen reward to trade in the cartridge for the prize money from our FamiTong. We sincerely hope that the first clear of this game would happen right here. Then~!! Let the game begin!!”

“Woahh!!!”

A shout that greatly resembled the spartans in the movie '300' rung out and the prologue to the start of the game flowed out from the various locations of the event.

“Kurgh~ I will finally see an end to this game, today.”

I swallowed a smile after seeing Mr. Shige's burning passion, that ignited from earlier, and clicked on the start button along with everyone else. Now... should I start clearing the game?

1 hour had passed since the start of the event, and 20 people were eliminated by around stage 5. The point of stage 5 was to not lose a single character to the behemoth boss and to safely move to stage 6. Thus, I also focused my concentration and maneuvered the main character to the front of the party. This was so that he would get focused while I inflicted damage with my archer from the back. This allowed me to safely pass the first gate.

However, the players that lost even one of their characters slowly gave in to the momentum of the enemy troops and, at around stage 10, 30 more players were eliminated.

“Ah~ everyone. Please give a little more effort. This game is similar to chess. If you don't carefully consider the moves of each and every character, your flow will be restricted and the moment that you start to lose your characters one by one, clearing the game will be made impossible. If there is anyone that made it through stage 10 without losing a single character, please raise your hand.”

In response, Mr. Shige and I, as well as 20 other player, quietly raised our hands.

“Great!! There’s still a possibility. We can do it!! Everyone, please give a motivational round of applause to these players!!”

“Go Go Go~!!! Wooahhh!!”

Amongst the cheering players, there were students who I saw from the book store. So those rascals had also purchased a game.

From stage 10 and onwards, Dragon Emblem’s plot developed into the Demon King waking up from his slumber and the difficulty spiked exponentially, like an exploding cannonball. If points were not correctly distributed, then facing the enemy hordes will get increasingly more difficult.

Mr. Shige, who was beside me, had nothing to say as he was intently focused on the game. Against the massive wave of the enemy, he was executing a blood bath by grouping them together as best as he could and launching an offensive with the backline mage.

And then we arrived at stage 15. On this stage that started a quest to look for the sword that would defeat the Demon King, Mr. Shige made a huge mistake. He forgot to buy reserves of the recovery staff from the start before beginning the stage. Dragon Emblem utilizes a feature that overwrites the current data with an auto-save method, so returning to a checkpoint was impossible.

“AAHHHH!!! I’ve made a mistake!!”

Mr. Shige’s scream reverberated in the auditorium. He had tried to minimize the damage to his characters as best he could, but...

“Katrina... My Katrina!!!!!! Ahhhh~!!”

He ended up losing the female lead character once again.

[1] [Here’s the history of Yongsan](#)

## Chapter 31 : Strange Game (5)

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Despite being a high priest with relatively low defense, Katrina was a major contribution to the battles for having the ability to heal allies. Losing her at stage 15 was akin to forfeiting any further opportunity to turn the tables over in future stages.

Having lost such an important unit, Mr. Shigeru fell into a panicked state and totally lost his cool, which resulted in his defeat against the black dragon at stage 18.

“D-Damn it... is this my limit...”

This event lasted from 9 am in the morning to 6 pm in the evening, and of the 100 players, only 11 players — including me — remained and most were tackling stage 20. Much to my surprise, a sole female player persevered amongst the ranks of the surviving players.

“Ahh~ how ruthless. There are now only 11 players left who are still in the game. Ah-! I stand corrected... Two players met their ‘Game Overs’ just as I said that! Now it has come down to 9 people!! This is a crucial moment, everyone~!!”

Mr. Junpei, who had met ‘Game Over’ at the 19th stage, was now focusing his full attention on boosting the morale of the remaining players. The game grew difficult for me as well, so much so that I almost let out a curse when I began stage 21.

‘Even though it’s a level I designed myself, this is still rather

extreme.’

On the front line facing the boss was the main protagonist, who had a high critical striking power, and a knight that served as the tank. Behind them was Katrina, who acted as the last line of defense, playing her role to keep the team away from the grasps of death itself.

Archers whose ‘eyesight range’ were leveled up served as long-range snipers in an area ten squares from the front line to assist in the crew, and characters whose levels were high enough helped the hero’s party to take care of the enemy cannon fodder.

“Exactly when will this game end? Based on the data from the 100 players, we predicted that stage 20 would be the final stage. But right now, we’re already past 23!

“The time is far past 9 p.m but not a single player has left yet and they are all watching the gameplay with much anticipation. The Demon King has finally shown himself at stage 24!! And the number of the players left is five, two of whom haven’t gotten a single character killed!

“They are ,respectively, Mintendo’s employee, the Korean, Kang Junhyuk, and the beautiful gamer Ms. Yuki. One of them will definitely see the game to its end~!!”

At stage 21... The Demon King is defeated. This stage was even harder than the final stage, stage 25. The reason for that was...

“Ah!! Finally!! The Demon King is defeated!! Player Satoshi has defeated the Demon King for the first time with his team~!!”

“Wooahhh~!!”

The moment the defeat of the Demon King was announced, the audience all flocked over to Mr. Satoshi. And, much to the surprise of the celebrating spectators who thought that there actually was an end to this game, a miraculous thing happened. At that moment, a message window popped up on the screen along with the prophecy of the Nether God.

“Ne-Nether God? Is this really happening? Oh dear!!!”

As the surroundings quieted down, the Nether God that had been unleashed from the body of the Demon King dealt fatal damage to all the characters.

“No!!!”

Mr. Satoshi had immediately lost his entire team without having a clue as to what had just happened. Subsequently, from one magic spell of the Nether God, a red “GAME OVER” notice popped up on the screen.

“This fucking!!!”

Boom!! Mr. Satoshi who had just gotten hit behind his head by the level’s design threw his game pad onto the ground. Thanks to



his sacrifice, other players knew to let their characters stand far away from the Demon King just before it died.

I also used the optimal distance to position my two archers to defeat the Demon King so I didn't lose even one character from the Nether God.

The Nether God who had inflicted damage onto the hero's team left a prophecy as he faded away, and the plot of the Dragon Emblem was heading towards its climax.

“Phew... I'm tired...”

Only 2 people, Ms. Yuki and I, had passed through stage 23 safely. But Ms. Yuki had also lost one archer, mage, and tank in the process, so before challenging the 24th stage, she prepared herself for the worst that is to come.

The event host also made the screen bigger by broadcasting the gameplay using a giant projector so the gamers who were eliminated could view it better. The video quality was awful, but the players said that it was better than nothing and let out a fantastic cheer.

“Now~ we are almost finished. Mr. Kang and Ms. Yuki, You two are the only ones remaining from the 100, this places a huge pressure on you guys.”

“Go~!! Show us the destruction of this game!!”

Along with the cheers from various places, I met Ms. Yuki's sight and nodded my head and challenged stage 24. The Nether God arc spanned stages 24 and 25. Despite it being only two stages, given the loss of Ms. Yuki's key fighting force, she was under immense pressure from the enemy and was fighting a difficult battle.

On the contrary, with the maxed archers I used to deal with the last stage, I easily brushed off the incoming wave of enemies. In the end, Mr. Yuki only had 1 archer unit left and had to concede after the enemy started pouring in from the hole in her defense.

"Ah... Ms. Yuki has fallen at stage 24. She is understandably letting out the tears of her soul. Who does the developer of this game think he is to make tears fall out of a beautiful women~!!?"

That, is he saying that for me to hear...? I smirked at the silly analysis of Junpei and focused my attention back on the game. At that moment, Ms. Yuki who had finished retouching her makeup came over to me.

"You must persevere till the end..."

"Ah, yes..."

I calmly stopped the advancing enemies one by one until only the black Demon King was left. After that, I led the characters in the hero's team, who were fully maxed out, to surround the Nether God and started attacking from all sides. All the spectators were letting out cold sweat watching my each and every move. At the

last stage of 25... The Nether God attempted to use a clone of himself against the hero just when he tried to finish it once and for all.

At that moment, Katrina, whom Mr Shigeru had adored so much, and Mariah, the mage, stood in front of the Nether God and the game paused. I beamed within my mind as one message popped up.

–Katrina and Mariah... who will you sacrifice to protect the hero–

“What!!!!!!!”

“Fuck!! No way!!”

“Argghhh!!! This fucking developer’s a son of a dog!!!”

The players who were gathered inside the event were frantic. Yes... It was necessary to sacrifice one female character no matter what to clear this game. The most skillful cleric who was in charge of healing her allies and the most powerful mage... A system that only allowed advancement to stage 25 with a sacrifice of one of these beauties, but I was the only player that could currently challenge stage 25.

“Kurgghhh... Now~!!!! This is truly a nefarious story!! A choice between the best cleric and the best mage... We have to choose now. Everyone~!! What kind of a developer would force an option like this. Really, whoever made this game is a damned bastard~!!”

The ultimatum that I had implemented was receiving all kinds of hate and criticism from the players. But the swearing was oddly very pleasant to hear... It represented how much the players had resonated with the two characters who had gone through many tribulations with the hero and how reluctant they were to give up either one.

And facing the ultimatum, an interesting thing happened inside the event venue. A vote was opened for who would be sacrificed between the two. As the players were discussing among themselves, i took that time to get a drink for myself and took a rest. Then, Mr. Shige approached me and said.

“Save Katrina. Please Junhyuk. You can’t let her die... I’m telling you, you definitely need a healer in the last stage?”

“Mr. Shige... this is just a game. Why are you being so serious...?”

Mr. Shige, as if his emotions were truly unchained, had tears glistening in his eyes and was begging me. At this moment, Junpei also smoothly approached me, opened his mouth, and said, “A true man should have a future with the sexy mage. Why bother with healing or peeling, just dominate everything with her magic~ I’m voting for Mariah, Junhyuk.”

“Haha, is that so?”

“Ah, I’m telling you to save Katrina!!!”

“It’s Mariah that should be saved!!!”

All hell has broken loose. At that moment, Ms. Yuki who had played by my side until the last moment approached me as well.

“Junhyuk...? Is it okay if I call you Junhyuk?”

“Yes, call me however you please~”

“From what I think, the next stage should be the final stage; you should save a character who is useful in combat so you can clear it.”

The auditorium quieted in response to her words. That’s right. The important thing was to clear the game. These players who had watched my gameplay of Dragon Emblem would definitely be able to clear the game the next time around. In response, the players in the auditorium cheered for me and let me make the final choice.

“While the players have voted with a ratio of 52:48 to sacrifice Mariah, we have decided to let Mr. Kang, the last surviving player, make this decision. If I had it my way, I would sacrifice a character with a dangling penis, but too bad that wasn’t an option that was presented to us... Now~!! Mr. Kang, please choose~!! Who will you sacrifice~!?”

After taking a cautious gulp and looking one last time at the players around me, I selected Katrina to be sacrificed in the end. The atmosphere called for a more calm and reserved lady than a

sexy one, so I picked her after much contemplation and aimed to give the most respect to the players present.

“Nooooo~!!!!”

As Mr. Shige let out a desolate wail, Katrina had perished from taking the attack of the Nether God to save the hero. The hero hugged the corpse of Katrina and gained the Champion of Light buff before the confrontation against the Demon King began.

The fun thing here was that the ending changes depending on which character that was selected as the sacrifice. If I had sacrificed Mariah instead, the hero would have turned into a Champion of Thunder and Lightning instead. What if both of them were dead by stage 24? Then there would be no buffs given to the hero. Accordingly, beating the final stage would become that much harder, and even if one was lucky enough to clear the game, no ending animations would be displayed.

“Woah... The hero is raging mad. He has a tremendous attack power. “

As the hero exuded a blue aura around his body unleashed a sword aura move, the players started exclaiming in excitement. The combined elements of special moves, transformations, and combination attacks had the peculiar effect of driving men of this era crazy... No... Actually, the men of the 21st century were no different from them either...

## Chapter 32 : Strange Game (6)

---

“Go~!! Destroy the Nether god!!”

Due to the hero's metamorphosis, the final stage was rather easy compared to the 23rd and 24th stage. Having obtained an enormous power boost, the hero was able to fight toe-to-toe with the Nether God and had begun to push him back; the completely transfixed players shouted at the top of their lungs and excitedly cheered me on. In the end... The Nether God was forced to its knee by the hero's sword...

“Uwahhhhhh~!! It's finished~!! It's finally the end!!”

“Phew...so it's finished...”

As expected, my hands were sweating and, after it was over, my body felt as though all the energy had been sucked dry. On the giant projector, cutscenes depicted Katrina's funeral ceremony as a lovely musical soundtrack played out. Rivers of indignant tears streamed out of the players who had witnessed her funeral.

Everyone was touched by the tragic ending of Katrina's sacrifice and vigorously applauded.

“That was an excellent game. It's truly an incredible story... It's almost as if I was watching a scene out of a movie...”

Mr. Shige was also clapping with a heartfelt expression. Yuki was

exclaiming out of astonishment, and Junpei was beaming with a satisfied grin on his face.

And... As this story came to an end, one message appeared.

–Hello. Thank you for enjoying Dragon Emblem. I’m a Korean developer that enjoys playing Family games. Dragon Emblem is a game that I developed by myself for one year.–

“He made Dragon Emblem alone!?”

The auditorium bustled in shock after this message popped up. The common conception was that this game was made by a Japanese company, but to think that this was made internationally... The people gathered in the auditorium each showed different reactions.

–This is a brand new genre called a simulation RPG that I introduced to you all. First, I want to sincerely apologize to every player for the lack of courtesy I’ve shown in exchange to make Dragon Emblem’s release an epic one. But to anyone viewing this message, you should’ve felt a level of immersion and realism that wouldn’t have been found in any other game. As a form of reimbursement, it’ll be possible to use this game’s GAME OVER file as an additional boost for the sequel. Please take good care of this cartridge and enjoy the continuation of this story. Thank you–

“Wow...as expected, there’s a sequel!! Woahh!!”



To think that I would be the first one to open the message that I've written... With a slight grin, I put down the gaming device. Just then, Mr. Junpei who had been watching the audience for a while now came up to me and asked, "Excuse me...Mr. Kang? By any chance, are you willing to hand this Dragon Emblem's cartridge to our FamiTong magazine? We can compensate you with 100,000 yen."

Suddenly, one person in the auditorium shouted.

"Sell it to me!! I'll give you 120,000!!"

"No!! I'll take it!! I'll pay 150,000~!!!"

Hoh..what is this, a live auction? Look around at the overflowing amount of bids in my surroundings, I had an expression of thorough befuddlement.

Amongst the players of Dragon Emblem, the majority of them were adults in their 20-30s. Due to the players having a certain amount of economical power, the price had instantly reached 300,000 yen.

"Um... just a minute, please."

As I calmed them down, the players who shouted a price looked towards me with a gaze full of hope.

"I am an employee of Nintendo. It would not be right for me to

pass on this game by inducing an auction. I've spent a great time with you all in this event sponsored by FamiTong. As for this cleared cartridge of Dragon Emblem, I will pass it on to Miss Yuki who unfortunately couldn't make it through at the very end."

"Me?"

Yuki who had been beside me, opened her eyes wide in response to my statement. With a slight smile, I took out the game cartridge from the Family and handed it to her.

"Take it. Miss Yuki, you have more than enough qualifications to receive this."

"Ah.. I don't know if I should ..."

"Please take good care of it, since there seems to be a sequel later on..."

"Thank you..."

After Miss Yuki lowered her head and thanked me, she came back up with a bright smile. As I stabbed Junpei in his sides who was watching with a soul-stolen expression, the bastard was startled and clumsily continued to coordinate the event.

"N-Now we will end the Dragon Emblem bee hive event here. We promise to record Mr. Kang's strategy down to the smallest detail and publish it in FamiTong's next monthly edition so everyone

will have the chance to clear it. This is your host, Ishimoto Junpei, signing out. Thank you~!!”

FamiTong’s sponsored event ended like this with the thunderous applause of the players. Although I gave my cleared copy of Dragon Emblem to Yuki, there was not a single person who complained. This went to show her excellence as a gamer... Well, her beauty also contributed too...

“Excuse me...”

Walking on the way back from the event along with Mr. Shige, I was stopped by Yuki who had called me out from behind. She handed a small piece of memo and nervously opened her mouth.

“This... is my contact information, if it’s alright with you, please contact me... Then, excuse me~!!!”

She ran off with a reddened face as if she was embarrassed. As I was watching her fading figure, Mr. Shige tapped my shoulders and spoke.

“You’ve really done it today, haven’t you~ Mr. Kang Junhyuk? Kekeke...”

“Please don’t tease me, Mr. Shige...”

“A girl with her looks who’s also a fan of video games? Go for it man~ Where can you find a girl like that in this day and age~”

“Haha... I don’t know about that...”

“But, it’s incredible, truly incredible. Dragon Emblem... How could those options be given to the players? And to be able to design all the levels by himself... “

“I know, right... It was also a tremendous shock for me at Stage 24.”

“Today, I’ve touched upon a new world of possibilities for video games. To think there was a crouching tiger like that hiding in Korea, it’s an eye opener as well...”

He’s right next to you... I forcibly suppressed my laughter and heartily pounded Mr. Shige’s back.

“Should we eat ramen before we go?”

“Are you buying?”

“Ah~ My workplace superior is being stingy as...”

“How much of a discrepancy between our salary there is, Director Kang~!!”

“Alright, I’ll buy.”

“Also buy mweeh a gyoza(fried dumplings)~~~”

“Hah~ you really...”

&

-The Aggressive Assault on Dragon Emblem!! Now, you can also clear the game!!!~

The FamiTong magazine who had holstered my gameplay data on their back started a massive advertising campaign and managed to sell a tremendous number of copies.

Especially Junpei, who had given Dragon Emblem a 40/40 perfect score, further went on to lament that the highest score of 40 was an understatement to a game as great as that; the effect of his comments were huge as well.

That’s right. With more players being able to clear the game, the sales will definitely rise.

Making money was good, but if the black market price is too high, the game would not reach a larger audience. I’ll have to prepare my next move...

I stopped in front of an alleyway of Akihabara on my way to work in Tokyo, and after briefly looking around, I stepped inside

Chandra's workshop.

“Kang~ Kang~ Kang is here.”

“Oh~ It's a Kang. We are work very hard. We... are want reward. Want much many.”

After not visiting Chandra's workshop for quite a while, Chandra's buddies turned their heads toward me and greeted me. Even though they weren't proficient in Japanese, they were still able to wear a good-natured smile on their faces.

Wasn't India a vassal state of England? They could've just spoken English instead...

What's their reason for being stubborn with trying to speak Japanese?

Are they trying to be a Roman if they came Rome?

Well, it would be helpful to frequently speak Japanese if they're going to stay in Japan in the long run...

“Alright, alright. But where is Chandra?”

“Chandra goes out to eat. Japan rice is delicious. Mixing curry with it, it's the best.”

Mmm... Curry rice is great. I'm also hungry, should I head out to eat?

“Where's the restaurant?”

“It's the Mega Curry right in front of us. They have a ton of amount. It is very full. But I eat two bowls~ haha”

Pumala, an Indian who was twice the size of an average person, lifted his thumbs up with a friendly smile. His name very much reminds me of a dwarf though...

I awkwardly smiled and nodded my head, and headed towards the curry house where Chandra was having his meal.

As I stepped inside the store, my olfactory senses were greeted with a full-blown spicy aroma which was enough to trigger my appetite. At that moment, Chandra who was sitting at the corner of the restaurant discovered me and waved both his hands.

I always felt maladroit looking at the sparkling eyes and the chiseled nose unique to Indians.

“Kang Junhyuk came~!!”

Chandra's Japanese was a bit better compared to his other Indian friends.”

“Chandra, it’s been awhile~”

“We worked hard... We made a ton like Junhyuk said. Dragon Em...”

“Shhh!! Shh!!”

As I put my fingers on my lips, Chandra quickly covered his mouth with both his hands and made an eye-grin.

“Hello, may I take your order?”

“I’ll have the mega curry, please.”

“Hai~ one order of a regular mega curry~”

In response to the breezy voice of the restaurant boss, the chef in the kitchen loudly said, “Yes~ One regular mega curry coming up~!!”

“Kang Junhyuk, what happened today? Did you come to eat curry? Curry here is good. Chandra likes it.”

“Do you think I came here to eat curry? I came here to see you.”

“To see Chandra? Chandra is working well though? Chandra and his friends are making 200 copies everyday.”



“Mn... Now you only need to make 30 a day.”

“Th...Thirty? That is too little. Then does Kang Junhyuk not need us anymore? Are you throwing us away like the other Japanese people?”

“Why would I throw you away... Instead, I’d like you to make something else for me.”

“Then it’s a relief. The curry got delicious again~ But what else do you want to make? I have fun working with Junhyuk. I turn into a secret agent feeling.”

“Let’s make an expansion pack.”

“Expansion pack... Mmm... What is that?”

Okay, I will draw for you again, draw for you I will... My drawing skills are truly growing day by day after drawing everything that could not be described with words in Japan~

I casually drew a space that would fit the Dragon Emblem cartridge and drew a cartridge that would fit the Family below that.”

“Dragon Emblem would be plugged inside this device, and that would be plugged inside the Family hole. Add a game data recovery

system in this expansion cartridge pack.”

The current price for Dragon Emblem was over 20,000 Yen. The price was the single-most detrimental disadvantage in that it couldn't be brought to more players. But the strategy guide to clearing it had been published in FamiTong, and the game would easily be beatable with the guide in hand. This was the conclusion that I've come to after much contemplation.

## Chapter 33 : Case By Case (1)

---

“Woah~ It’s miraculous. It’s a system to restore deleted data~ I know. This is easy. I can do it with my toes.”

I lurched at the scene of Chandra engineering the system using his feet, and fiercely shook my head.

This is not that important, so why is he thinking so deeply into this...

“Ah... And I will also put the brief clip into the sequel as well. You can spread it around in the market by using your contacts.”

“Okay, okay Chandra. I understand it 100%. Don’t worry~”

After the Indian native stared intently at the picture and nodded his head, he extended a hand toward me.

He was signalling to give him the retainer fee.

I took a white envelope full of cash out of my jacket and handed it to Chandra.

“Kang Junhyuk definitely has credit. That’s why Chandra likes Kang Junhyuk.”

“Here is your mega curry, esteemed customer~!!”

-Crash

Along with a sudden vibration, a plate the size of a fruit bowl containing curry was placed in front of me. What is this... enormous amount of curry?

“Excuse me, I ordered the regular size?”

“Yes~ this is the regular size for the mega curry. The super-sized plate is that over there...”

I did a double-take after looking at the plate of the person who was eating beside me. The size of the plate that he was digging his spoon into was at least 1.5 times bigger than mine.

As I sat there with a spoon in my hand strategizing about where to start, Chandra stifled his laughter and opened his mouth.

“If you eat this, you won’t be hungry for the rest of the day~ Pumala eats two of these plates. Eat quickly, Kang Junhyuk.”

Ah... I won’t be eating curry for a while after this...

Due to the expansion cartridges that the Indian natives produced, the price of Dragon Emblem was falling to my desired price tag.

The final price of it was 9800 Yen between the black market

exchange. The custom chip inside the cartridge had set the price higher compared to the average game, but, thanks to FamiTong magazine explaining the secret of Dragon Emblem's unusually high price in an article, the players were able to accept the high price tag.

Of course, there would be a problem if the price had kept increasing but, by using the expansion cartridge, game shops were able to reset the game data.

In the beginning, game shops doubted the efficacy of the expansion package for Dragon Emblem because it was impossible to play as a single unit, but the players that kept their cartridge, after having their data wiped, swarmed all over each other to restore their lost data, which brought in additional income. Thus, there was no problem with continuing the service.

Also, being able to enjoy multiple ending scenarios, after the game was correspondingly cleared, caused the expansion cartridge to start selling like wildfire.

For this reason... Mr. Gunpei, Mr. Shigeru, and I were called upon again by President Yamauchi.

“What the hell is this predicament!!! Our Mintendo is being completely exploited by that Korean developer bastard!!”

At that moment, Mr. Gunpei lifted his glasses up, and he roared:

“But the truth is that the sales for the Family has increased a lot due to the drama caused by Dragon Emblem. That is especially the case when the expansion cartridge came out. I’m thoroughly impressed as a fellow engineer.”

“That’s right. To think that such a method could be used to lengthen the lifespan of a game.”

“Do you think I called you all here to compliment that Korean developer?! Plan a strategy, a strategy!!”

I, who was silently standing there, opened my mouth:

“Do we really need a specific strategy...?”

“What? Then you want to leave this alone? A game that isn’t paying a single Yen of royalty to us is popular as hell, and you want me to just watch that happen with my two eyes wide-opened?”

“There will be no point in planning a strategy at this point since Dragon Emblem has already come this far. To a game that’s circulating around the black market already, rather than flushing the developer out, I think it’s right to protect him instead.”

“You’re saying that we have to protect him instead? Why the hell should we!?”

“What are you going to do if Dragon Emblem switches over to NEGA’s disk?”

In response to my words, President Yamauchi, along with everyone else, gaped their mouths open with a “clup”. It looks like everyone had not thought of this scenario before.

Honestly speaking, as the developer of Dragon Emblem, my comment was no different than a threat to President Yamauchi. Mr. Shige understood my words, and he quickly tried to persuade President Yamauchi.

“N-Now that I think about it, Kang-kun is right. With that marketing ability and developing skill, it wouldn’t be strange at all if he were to move to NEGA in the future. Of course, the first party games made at our Mintendo are excellent, but now, we can’t ignore the third party developers. We can’t ignore the possibility of a boycott from the developers such as Kawata’s Balloon Fight, Real Kungfu, Circus, and especially major league players like Dragon Warrior and Final Frontier...”

“So you’re saying that if we rub a popular third party game the wrong way, our Mintendo’s image could take a hit... Fuck... Damn...”

“Dragon Emblem is already receiving appraisal from other game companies as being the ultimate game. Almost everyone knows it as “a game that transcends its time”; there are totally no benefits for Mintendo to blatantly be in the opposition.”

“Dragon Emblem did not pay any royalties, but the upside to this is that the overall quality of Family games have grown immensely.

Just the fact that Dragon Emblem was released through our Family is something worth celebrating.”

“Humph, Mother fucking... Forced to close our eyes like we don’t know anything...”

At that moment, Mr. Shige conversely added:

“How about... advertising it for them instead?”

“Mmn...? Leaving them alone is apparently not enough, so you want to spend money to advertise for them?? What the hell do you mean?”

“Truthfully, with the new requirements for the initial quantity and the increase of royalties demanded, complaints have started trickling in from third parties. If we popularize Dragon Emblem along with other developers, then our image would surely be painted as an understanding and experienced console company...”

A few days after that...

“I’m Ishimoto Junpei, reporter from the FamiTong magazine. President Yamauchi has requested an interview today. You had something important to say to the developer of Dragon Emb...”

“Yes, that’s right. It’s no exaggeration to say that it left the deepest impression to me amongst the recent games released.”



“Ah~!! You’ve also enjoyed playing Dragon Emblem, have you?!”

“Of course. I’ve also greatly enjoyed Dragon Warrior and Final Frontier. Having played Dragon Emblem recently... a thought flashed across my mind.”

“What... kind of thought was it?”

“It occurred to me that most of the games that lead our Family are not first party games, but rather third party games. The game that is currently representing Japan, Dragon Warrior, is a project developed by Phoenix, not from our Mintendo. Dragon Emblem is also the same.”

“That’s right. First party games from Mintendo like Super Marigee and The Legend of Karin are excellent, but the quality of recent games developed by third parties definitely can’t be ignored.”

“Correct. Our Mintendo and various other game companies will have to exist in a symbiotic relationship with the third parties to lead the game industry to a brighter future together. Following this, we have made the decision to cut the initial stock quantity requirement by half and reduce a portion of the royalties from games.”

“This news will be highly welcomed by the game industry.”

“We’ve made this difficult decision with the mindset of letting even more players enjoy great games such as Dragon Emblem. I thank the wonderful developer of Dragon Emblem, and we hope that his future projects will be released through our Mintendo’s Family.”

President Yamauchi concluded the interview with a solemn atmosphere in a completely different tone from his discussion with us.

His last comment in the interview expressed his fear of Dragon Emblem moving to Nega was truly a spectacular scene.

Mr. Shige and I barely suppressed our bursting laughter, and we darted to the back of the headquarters building after we finished watching the interview.

“Wahaha, did you see the president’s face!? Kukekeke~!!”

“Ah~ I almost died from laughter too.”

“But Dragon Emblem is truly incredible too, making our president beg with such sincerity like that.”

“That’s what I mean. Thanks to that, the situation regarding the initial quantity was taken care of, and with the royalties being reduced, the game industry should be rejoicing as well.”

“The competition will become much fiercer. I should also hurry

up with the production of Super Marigee 3...”

“The 2nd release was a bit lacking, right...?”

“That’s... I did something slightly crazy so...”

The game of misfortune, Super Marigee 2.

When the fans of the Super Marigee series were asked to choose their favorite release, players had chosen the 1st and the 3rd as the best. However, in retrospect, the 2nd one was ambiguous in their memory. Did it really come out? And if it did, what kind of game was it...?

Actually, riding off of the success of the 1st, Super Marigee 2 boasted a significantly higher difficulty level, and it was dubbed a stress maker.

At that time, Mr. Shige was inspired by comments from players of games being too easy, and he went into producing a mad level of difficulty. There were no noticeable changes to the graphics, and, with the failure to properly adjust the difficulty level, he received a cold reception from the Japanese players.

Meanwhile, the American branch of Mintendo was intently waiting on the release of Super Marigee 2; however, seeing the bland reactions from Japan, and, with Mr. Shigeru admitting that the game was not good enough, he did an incredulous thing to Super Marigee.

He replaced the characters of another Super Marigee-like game with characters from Super Marigee. The rip-off was called HokiHoki Panic, and the gameplay was that of picking radishes in the desert and throwing it at enemies in an Arabian night setting.

In the end, it was released with the title of Super Marigee USA, but players simply could not understand why Super Marigee was killing his enemies by picking radishes and throwing it at them instead of stepping on them, like he did in the first game.

Some rumors, that said that Mr. Shigeru wasn't involved in the development of the game, even, sprung up due to the glaring differences between the first and the second game; thus, it was remembered as such.

“Well, I don't have any other projects to work on, so I'll focus my attention on developing the third one...”

“If you'd want, I can lend you a hand, too.”

“Kuh~ If Kang-kun wants to help, I'll definitely agree~!! Should we go have some udon for lunch? Let's talk about the next release while we're there.”

“Oh? Then you're buying this time, right? Mr. Shige?”

“... You always have to say the last word.”

“Treat me to some gyoza too.”

“Alright, alright~!!”

## Chapter 34 : Case By Case (2)

---

At an Udon house near our company...

Mr. Shige and I were moistening our mouths with the warm water that was served to us.

It was a small restaurant; as I looked around at the antiquated interior, I spotted the portraits of 3 men hanging on one of the walls.

This seems like a family owned Udon house operating through 3 generations, I'm looking forward to the taste. At that moment, Mr. Shige asked me.

“But have you tried contacting yet?”

“Mmm? Contact who?”

“Woosh... you work-aholic... I'm talking about Miss Yuki. Miss Yuki!!!”

“Ahh...”

“Ahh...? You haven't contacted her yet, right?”

“Yes, I had no opportunity to stop by Tokyo, so...”

“Y-You~ idiot. Did you break your fingers, you can call from here, why are you trying to explicitly do it after you’re in Tokyo!? Then give me that contact information~!! Let me get some action too.”

“Eh hey~ Look at the obvious age disparity, Mr. Shige. Saying that is-”

“So just try contacting her once~ It’s already been a week since the Dragon Emblem event. You have to take into consideration the person waiting after giving their contact info.”

“It’s because I was busy. I was actually planning to give her a call now that this Dragon Emblem crisis is over.”

“Yeah, you thought well. Work is work, but a social life is important too~ Now let’s talk about Super Marigee 3.”

Fuck... Business talk is spewing out of this person’s mouth who said social life is important just now...

“Since we came to a restaurant, let’s talk after we order something.”

“Ah, right. Waiter~ Can you recommend some house specialties? Kitsune? Tanuki?”

“Our specialty on the menu is Tanuki~”

“Then 2 orders of Tanuki please~”

What’s this? Do I not have a say? I hurriedly shouted to the waiter.

“No, I’ll take a Kitsune, and add a Kyoza too~!!”

“Hai~ One Tanuki, one Kitsune and one Kyoza~!!”

In response to the waiter’s shout, a roar of acknowledgement was heard from the kitchen. The Udon noodles of Japan were ideally chewy, hence I enjoyed them quite often.

“Oops, looks like I forgot about the Kyoza. I thought Kang-kun was a Tanuki (raccoon) but you were actually a Kitsune (fox)~”

Tanuki was a type of Udon with fried crumbs in the toppings; it didn’t suit my tastes very well. I’d rather enjoy the Kitsune Udon which had a soy and mirin flavored soup base with a fried bean curd topping. Mr. Shige watched this ordeal and grinned slightly to me before going back to topic.

“What do you think is the main flagship of Super Marigee, Kang-kun?”

“Mmm... Firstly, if the radish picking system is thrown away,



over half the game would be worthy as a hit title.”

Mr. Shige’s face instantly scrunched up.

“There won’t be any radish picking anymore... It won’t ever be picked!! I’ve been picking radishes off my rice cake soup because of that!!!”

The shock from Super Marigee 2 must’ve been tremendous for him. I surreptitiously giggled in my mind as I answered.

“Super Marigee is all about jumping. Marigee’s nickname was also jump man in Donkey Kom.”

“Right. Jump... The jumping gameplay needs to be amplified.”

“How would...?”

Mr. Shige drew a light sketch of Marigee in the notebook and tapped the character with a pencil as he spoke:

“For example, the height of the jump depending on the objects stepped on... You know~ Like a trampoline on the playground for kids: a tumble element... Or adding white angel wings which would flap while Marigee descends.”

“Mmm... Adding snow white wings to an italian uncle with a mustache... it seems highly pedophilic.”

“...Right? It’s extremely easy to understand you, Kang-kun because you say everything like a rock-solid fastball. Although it hurts my heart sometimes...”

At that moment, the restaurant owner placed the two plates of Udon in front of us.

“Here is the Tanuki and the Kitsune Udon. Have a great meal~”

“Ah, yes we wi... Wow~ The garnish on the top is really cute.”

“Right? My granddaughter loves Udon so I cut the fish cakes into racoon and fox shapes, and the reaction was good~ How is it? It’s cute isn’t it?”

“Kids would love something like this. You have a perceptive mind, sir.”

“I have to constantly wrack my brains to make a living. This Udon restaurant has been around for almost 100 years already. During the course of those years, we had to modify the recipe to satisfy the changing tastes of our customers and came up with the curry udon and fried udon during the 2nd generation. It’s hard to survive with just a plain old Udon nowadays... Now~ dig in before it cools down.”

“Alright~ thank you for the meal.”

I chopped the wooden chopsticks in half and was stirring the noodles when Mr. Shige who was right beside me stared intently at the bowl of Udon and muttered to himself.

“Tanuki... Tanuki... Marigee... Tanuki... Marigee...”

“It’s a racoon Marigee!! What do you think!? Instead of mushrooms, Marigee would be able to transform by eating tree leaves. He would be able to traverse the skies by twirling this tail right here~!!”

He made my favorite meal, the Kook-Bap into a reptilian villain, and transformed a peach dessert into the peach princess, and now it’s a Udon dish... Anyways, I can’t have a proper meal with this guy...

—

That night. After leaving work, I was unconcernedly sitting in front of the telephone in my room. In front of the telephone was the piece of paper with Miss Yuki’s contact info.

“Wow~ Why am I getting nervous over this!?”

If a random person was looking at me, they’d think that I was pussyng out in front of the telephone, but I, who had been living in 2015, felt incredibly awkward at the idea of calling someone else’s house.

If there were mobile phones, I'd at least have the option to text first, but to think that I'd have to call forthrightly... I held the receiver and briefly hesitated before slowly turning the dials on the telephone.

With a click click click, the sound of the turning spring rang out, and a tone was starting to be heard from the other end of the telephone.

“Hello?”

F...First of all, It's a young woman's voice...!! I groomed my voice for a short moment and spoke.

“Is... this Miss Yuki?”

“Ah, Yuki? I'm Yuki's older sister, please wait a moment~”

Urgh... she had a sister... After a while, a voice calling Yuki could be heard over the receiver, and a familiar voice was soon heard.

“Yes, this is Ishikawa Yuki.”

“Ah... That... We've met each other in the Dragon Emblem event. This is Kang Junhyuk.”

“Ah~!! Mr. Junhyuk~ Hello.”

“Yes, well I was busy with work so I couldn’t call sooner.”

“So that was the case... I thought you had forgotten about me because I haven’t heard from you.”

“N...No, I haven’t forgotten at all. It was a bit awkward for me to call a number that I’d been abruptly given...”

“It also took me an immense amount of courage to give you my number that time!?”

“Sorry. I’ll make up for it by treating you to a meal the next time I’m in Tokyo.”

“When are you coming?”

The average Japanese would say ‘It’s fine~ You don’t have to’ as a response, but she’s unexpectedly cutting right to the chase with her question.

Coincidentally, I had business at Pentagon Soft in regards to the sequel for Final Frontier. I promised to contact her before coming to Tokyo and was finally able to put down the receiver.

“Ah... this really is... I’m still having trouble speaking to girls after being transported to 1983... I had no trouble speaking with company employees... How strange...”

I let out a small sigh and turned the power button on the computer.

Beep~ Dipiriri~

A computer in this period was very entertaining. It was awkward for me at first to use the prompt system instead of Windows at first, but I was completely familiar with it now.

Inputting a command in the prompt, I brought up my current code and fell into a brief stupor.

The sequel scenario for Dragon Emblem had already been thought up of before its release so it was transplanted without any hiccups. And recently, I've been developing another game.

The genre for this should be... a massive scale shooting war action? This was what I had in mind for now.

I made Dragon Emblem, but since my name wasn't associated with that, I've decided to publish this project under Mintendo's license while using my name.

—

A few days later. In the conference room of the Mintendo headquarters, a presentation about a new game in development was shown. Aside from the Mintendo employees, there were even a few reporters from the FamiTong magazine.

The first presentation was Mr. Shige's Super Marigee 3.

The background design for the game was exhibiting a unique animation and looked just like a play in a theater using the Dan man pole's curtain call.

Especially for the appearance of Super Marigee, who was introduced with a raccoon's tail, inspired by the Udon meal we had, the people gathered in the conference room were chatting about its cuteness.

The raccoon Marigee was able to traverse high up into the sky after spamming the jump button when the character is running at a certain speed. As this scene was shown, everyone chuckled at the scene of Marigee flying through the air.

Mr. Shige added that he used this element to implement various scenarios in the different stages where hidden routes were there which made it possible to skip stages or get one's hands on rare items,

‘The latest Marigee series is pouring out the foundation that would serve as the signature feature for the Marigee series here... A tree leaf that allows one to transform into a tree lead, or different pathways that are hidden in each stage...’

Finally, with the feat of Marigee turning into a buddha statue from a racoon, Mr. Shige ended his presentation.

“Good~!! Very good. Yes, something like this is Super Marigee~!! Shige, you finally woke up from your stupor.”

President Yamauchi clapped like a maniac walrus with a pleased expression. Mr. Gunpei, who was mediating the conference had to calm the atmosphere down before introducing the next game. The next game was a game that was pulling huge popularity in arcades Family's Hondurai model, and Double Dragon was introduced.”

Both were able to support 2 players, and since it was a title that was pulling massive popularity in arcades, the atmosphere in the conference room was getting heated by the moment. At that instant, FamiTong reporter Junpei asked Mr. Gunpei.

“Do you know when the new mobile game console would be released, that was announced at the event of the Legend of Karin's release? And the price!?”

Mr. Gunpei responded with a tentative face.

“We are inspecting the situation for this year's Christmas season. Given the high expectations of our players, our Mintendo is doing the best we can do to control the price, but a set price has not been determined yet. We would be able to convey some accurate information in about a month.”

“Woahhh!!!”



“Then we will end this new project conference with this next title. The director for this game has made me very anticipating. Like everyone knows, he proposed the duck hunt idea, and along with Mr. Shigeru, this is the black horse of our Mintendo, introducing our secret developer, Mr. Kang Junhyuk.”

## Chapter 35 : Case By Case (3)

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“Woahhh~!!! It’s the developer of duck hunt?”

“According to Mr. Shige, that guy is extremely capable, and he’s also a Korean.”

“A Korean... ? Now that I think about it, the developer of Dragon Emblem was also Korean...?”

The conference room was filled with murmurs in response to Mr. Gunpei’s introduction. I slowly stood up from my seat and went up to the podium with the floppy disk.

“Hello everyone, it’s an honor to stand in front of so many people to introduce my first project. Like Mr. Gunpei had said, I’ve only been able to partake in supporting roles, so I haven’t released any works that I could call my own up until now. The controversy regarding Dragon Emblem has been a big issue recently. As a fellow Korean [to the developer], I made this game with the goal to satisfy the Family gamers. The genre of this game is a unique genre called the “Multiplayer warfare shooting action”.”

“M... Multiplayer... Warfare shooting action? But if it’s multiplayer, does it have something to do with battling against an opponent?”

As the murmurs came in about at the description of an MMO, I inserted the floppy disk into the spot and turned on the power.

“Is there anyone that would like to try this out?”

Junpei who was sitting behind me rapidly shot his hands up.

“Mr. Ishimoto Junpei. Please come to the front.”

Mr. Junpei wore an awkward smile on his face as he made his way up the podium.

Actually, I had planned this out with Junpei before the conference; to have him raise his hand as soon as I called for the experiment and come on to the podium...

Of course, it would've worked out with other people as well, but them dying too easily wouldn't have made for a good show, so Junpei, who was well versed in playing high difficulty games, was the best choice.

“Please pick up the pad lying in front of you and go ahead and start the first stage of the game made as a Demo. Ah~ The title of this game is “Psychic battle”.”

“Psychic battle? So it's a battle of superpowers... Not a bad plot.”

As Mintendo's logo faded away and the BGM (Background music) started trickling out along with the Psychic Battle text, the enthusiasm of the people inside the conference rose higher and

higher.

Junpei pressed the start button, and three attractive female characters popped up on the screen as characters to choose from.

“Girls!? Didn’t he say it was a shooting game?”

“They could be a pilot.”

“Ah... that’s right...”

In this time period, there was a strong notion that shooting games had to take characteristics of 1945 or TwinD, but seeing the emergence of the beauties on the screen, they must have automatically judged the girls as pilots.

But as Junpei chose a character, and after the awesome cutscene, he started traversing the skies and attacked the stage.

“Ah!! So this is the reason for the name psychic.”

The battle system for Psychic used a type of swing scroll to simulate shooting. If there was a comparison to be made, it was based off the popular arcade game “Tengai”

As Junpei was smoothly controlling the character back and forth, he pressed the A button to fire a blue-colored projectile at the enemy.

:Hmm... the plot of this game is unique, but the play system is like any other shooting game.”

This Junpei, he’s publicly shitting on the game made by his friend. But that’s one of the reasons why I trust him more...

“Please continue playing further.”

There was no particular strategy in a shooting game. Avoiding the projectiles of the enemy and attacking them with your own was an intuitive system that anyone could easily learn.

The surrounding enemies shot a barrage of projectiles towards the main character.

“Uh... Huhhh...!?”

Junpei was able to dodge the first couple projectiles easily, but seeing the barrage that filled the entire screen he started making weird screeching noises.

I had heard this screeching before at the game center before. When Junpei is completely immersed in something, he unconsciously makes these odd screeching noises.

My presentation progressed smoothly aside from this banshee-like screeching noise.

The speed of the projectiles were set to random firing speeds in Psychic Battle. Some projectile flew in fast while others flew at a turtle pace. But if a combination of these different types filled the screen, what would be the result?

“Uhh!!! Arrrrrgggggghhhhh!!!!”

Junpei was somehow miraculous dodging the incoming projectile even as he was screaming.

“Oh~~ That’s incredible. He’s a reporter for FamiTong magazine? The quality of the game is great, but how could he dodge all those projectile?”

“R...right? I feel dizzy just from watching...?”

“Argghhh~!! A bomb!! Is there no bomb in this game?”

As Junpei was forced to a corner and he had no path to run, he desperately shouted towards me. In shooting games, a bomb was often used to give a brief period of respite to the players by clearing the screen.

“Turn the cross player buttons and press the B button.”

“T...turn the cross player button?”

Yes... Psychic battle was the first sequence command type shooting game.

After Junpei followed my advice and completed the command sequence, Boom!! A refreshing roar resounded and the translucent barrier around the character started intercepting the enemy projectile.

“Woahh!!!”

The people who were watching this impressive game let out a cheer. Junpei took this moment to draw a quick breath and hurriedly rushed out of the corner and immersed himself in the game again.

But that was only for a moment... Another wave of barrages corned him into a tight spot, and Junpei let out a yelp and begin maneuvering the projectiles again.

On the first stage of Psychic battle, the projectiles consisted of a small ball and a thin needle which flew at different speeds towards the player. This was the first time Junpei was playing this game as well, so he was forced to take some of the incoming damage with his body.

At that moment, one employee who was watching the game spoke.

“He’s not dying easily even after taking some hits, is that the

health bar on the top of the screen?”

“Psychic Battle is different from other shooting games in that getting hit once doesn’t spell death. There’s a HP bar just like an action game along with an SP gauge to use special abilities with. The SP gauge could be expended to attack enemies, and recover by consuming items. Mr. Junpei, press the Arrow keys front and back 2x and press the B button.”

Junpei followed my tip and moved the character forwards and backwards and pressed the B button. Subsequently, multiple laser beams shot out from the character in various angles and instantly annihilated the enemy forces.

“Ohh!!!! That’s awesome!?”

“Next, try up, down, up, down, B button.”

Wiiing!!!

As the beams of light the sprouted out from the character, and the projectiles that filled with screen disappeared, the audience led out a sigh of relief.

Junpei developed a basic sense for this game, slowly filled up the SP bar, and eventually confronted the first boss shaped like an insect.

The threat of the giant boss along with the barrage of projectiles



made the difficulty insanely high. As big as the body of the boss was, that was how much the movability of the character was reduced.

Especially for this boss, the most evil thing was...

“Kurghhm!! What’s this!!!”

Because these missiles will multiply and sprout multiple projectiles...

The giant missile that was slowly squeezing the air pipes of the player as it came nearer was programmed to burst into mini-missiles at a certain distance.

And at that instant. The CPU of the demo computer encountered a massive resource overload and the gameplay started lagging.

Even for the tiniest projectile on the screen, it had to calculate the pathway, and calculations had to be made to inflict damage onto the character when it made contact. These profusion of calculations caused the overload on the system.

Junpei clenched his teeth and steadily progressed through the incoming barrage. To the people watching, this scene exuded a bitter-sweet sensation of a stifling sensation as well zipping thrill.

“Ohh... It’s almost like a slow motion...”

This point of being unable to add anymore projectiles onto the screen. Preparing for this exact moment of not being able to express any more projectiles, I implemented a special device beforehand. The mouth of the giant insect bursted open.

“What the hell!?”

Krooomm~!!!

A lazer cannon swallowed more than half the screen and the barrage of projectiles disappeared, and Junpei’s character along with it, with any trace. With the screech of him....

“Guahhhhhhhh!!!”

Poof~~!!!

## GAME OVER

In the end, Junpei wasn’t able to clear the first boss and ended in complete failure. This game allowed only one life in exchange for the HP bar.

“I...To think I couldn't even clear the first stage in a shooting game...”

Junpei must've received quite a shock; he was looking at the screen with a blank expression. I patted the shoulders of the crestfallen Junpei and grinned.

“You did plenty well. Actually, it would've been awkward for me if you'd defeated the boss. The first stage still has yet to be fully developed so I was worried that you might clear it.

But why is the conference room this quiet even after the demo? I expected at least some applause and congratulatory remarks, but as I looked up at the faces of the audience, they were all wearing blank expressions.

“Then... we'll end the debut of Psychic Battle with thi...”

“Wooahhhhhhh!!!!!!!”

A tremendous clamor rose up as if the spell on time had been broken. Junpei who had been sitting directly in front of the screen was also clapping with a proud expression.

“This is the first ever game he developed? Unbelievable!!!”

“It's as if I'm seeing a completely new type of shooting game.”

Mr. Gunpei who had been watching the conference came up to me and thumped my shoulder as he spoke.

“I knew you would come out with an unbelievable dude, Kang-kun. Incredible. I’m shocked~!!”

“Haha... thank you, Mr. Gunpei.”

But in the midst of the cheering crowd, one person wasn’t smiling. Mr. Shigeru had been sitting on a chair with a solidified expression and took a long stare at me before leaving the conference room.

The debut presentation for Mintendo’s new game was a big success. President Yamauchi was very satisfied knowing Psychic Battle and Super Marigee 3 would be great successes by watching the reactions of the audience in the conference room.

Following this, the participants had a chance to try the new games out, and the funny thing was more people were flocking over to Psychic Battle than Super Marigee 3.

The allure of challenging this new shooting game must’ve tickled the competitive spirit in the audience. But most of the audience weren’t even able to progress through the halfway mark and encountered a GAME OVER.

“Look at this~!! It’s not because I’m doing bad, okay? This game

is just ridiculously hard...”

Junpei had been watching the various challengers failing and was grinning ear-to-ear as he came over to me.

“That’s why I wanted you to be the demonstrator. If the play time was too short, the game would end before all that excitement was built up.”

“You, you bastard. You used me!”

“Friends should be helping each other out. You’re thinking of this as being used? You had fun up there too.”

## Chapter 36 : Case By Case (4)

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“Mmm~ I have to admit, it did feel awesome. The reception was also great... From what I see, people seem to be more enthusiastic than Super Marigee 3...?”

A few Mintendo employees nearby had turned their gazes to Junpei. Afterall, to the developers at Mintendo, Kumamoto Shigeru was almost a god-like existence...

Junpei dodged the eye-bullets aimed at him and spoke to me.

“Sh...Should we go outside for a walk? Maybe a cigarette?”

“Yeah, let’s also get some coffee.”

After coming out of the headquarter building, Junpei let out a long sigh with a relieved face.

“Puah~ That atmosphere was lively.”

“So why did you say that in the first place~ Keke”

“I mean, I spoke it as it was. It’s not like my eyes are blind, it was obvious that Psychic Battle was more popular, right?”

“You can stop talking now, someone might hear.”

As the vending machine spit out a cup of coffee, Junpei put a cigarette in his mouth with a dejected mood.

“Hey Junhyuk, about Psychic Battle, you said it was a multiplayer-action when you were introducing it but the playstyle doesn’t differ much from other shooting games that much? The command system was fascinating though...”

“Oh, that’s... it’s still in the alpha stage; I’m going to be adding a multiplayer interface to it.”

“Ah~ alright. Also, aren’t there too little playable characters? There are only three choices to choose from...”

“After the second stage, bosses will have psychic powers like the characters and they will be unlocked as playable characters after you defeat them. A total of 6 playables will be added to the roster.”

“So your group will grow with the development of the game~!! That’s brilliant.”

Junpei nodded his head continuously and flashed a grin. At that moment, a familiar voice was heard from behind the vending machine. The owner of this voice was Mr. Shige.

“Kang-kun, a game developer shouldn’t lie to the players.”

“Here you were, Mr. Shige. But what do you mean by me lying?”

“Your Psychic Battle... An endless barrage-type game of that level, there’s no chance it would be acceptable with the current Family standards, am I right?”

Junpei was startled at the sudden appearance of Mr. Shige, so much that he almost burned his hands with the lighter while trying to put his hand over mouth. As the old saying went... A bird will overhear at sunrise, and a rat at night...

Different from his usual self, Mr. Shige was wearing an extremely stern expression on his face. He must’ve been affected by the reaction of the participants in the conference afterall.

“I can make it.”

“What...?”

“It’ll take a bit of time, but I will be able to make it.”

“How would you...?”

“Mmm... I can’t tell you right now, but it’ll be wii”

“Yeah? Then should we make a little wager?”



“What...?”

“Your Psychic Battle and my Super Marigee 3, which title will sell more?”

Phew... what’s with this infighting...

&

“Hey, have you tried out the Psychic Battle that time? Director Kang’s game is truly incredible. It’s on a completely different realm..”

“In any case, it’s a shooting game. I think Super Marigee 3 that also came out is the best. It’ll definitely be a giant hit this time around too.”

“ ‘In any case, a shooting game’? So you haven’t played Psychic Battle, haven’t you? The level of immersion is no joke, I tell you.”

I was taking a brief respite out of my day-drinking coffee in the breakroom-when two male employees walked in following a clamor.

“Ah, Director Kang...”

The two were taken aback after seeing me and bowed their heads.

“Hello, are you guys here for some coffee?”

“Ah... yes. It's our break time...”

“Same with me. Here, take a seat. I'll make the coffee for you guys.”

“N-No thank you, You don't have to do that.”

“Colleagues should be able to drink coffee with each other. It's nothing much, here, take these.”

The two men were at a loss and repeatedly stood up and sat back down with awkward postures as I handed them coffees from the vending machine. Why so skittish... Are they new recruits?

“Are you guys new?”

“Um...? Ah, we both joined two months ago at the same time.”

“For two whole months...? I'm sorry. I'm frequently out on outings, so I have no time to recognize faces...haha.”

“Not at all, you're preparing for the release of the new console on top of game development... you must be incredibly busy.”

They'll be wasting their precious break time and not be able to

talk if I'm pointlessly near them... I exchanged a few more brief words and left the break room after telling them to work hard.

As I closed the door, I heard the voice of one of them through a slight opening.

“Kyaa~ Director Kang is awesome. That fox.. He looks to be the same age as me but he has an aura of the elite.”

“From what I heard, he made a huge contribution when he was working in the American branch. He seems to be on close terms with Mr. Shigeru and Mr. Gunpei too~ Ability and social networking... Nobody is on the same level as him among his age group.”

‘Mmm~ So that’s my image to new employees...’

After the presentation of the new game titles, peculiar happenings were revolving inside Mintendo; Mr. Shige and I had friction with each other over which of our projects were better a while ago. This kind of atmosphere isn't good for games being released at the same time from the same company. It's resembling a battle-to-the-death rather than a friendly competition.

It was getting increasingly more awkward to develop these two games in the same development room, so I gathered as much manpower as I could and moved over to my New Console Development department. Due to that, our office was a bit disorderly compared to other departments.

As soon as I sat down, the manager in charge of the controls for the New Console, came up to me and asked a question.

“Excuse me director, I brought the concept for the new controller model. Would you take a look?”

“Alright, sure.”

The draft for the new controller concept that Kimura handed to me felt similar to NEGA’s controllers rather than our own Family.

“It’s not bad, but can you modify it a bit? We still have some time left, so I will wait until your design team comes up with a more creative concept.”

“Understood. Do you have any suggestions in mind, Director?”

“Let’s... increase the button count?”

“Buttons? Our team discussed this and as a result, we already increased upped the number from 2 keys to 4...”

“The game will become increasingly complicated in the future. There’s only basic functions like jumping and attacking right now but more functions will be needed as this genre grows.”

“Then have do you have any thoughts on the set number of buttons?”

“How about a 6-button system? I visited an arcade recently and saw a violent bone-destroying action game there.”

“A bone-destroying action game?”

Year 1987. A problematic title that caused the owners of arcades to have a headache was released.

Why was it a problematic title? That was because the game broke the rules that were set in stone in those arcades.

An arcade was by definition, a place where commoners went to enjoy games, so it was coined the term “Game Center” in my country.

The word “Game” originally had a positive connotation, however Game Centers had leached off the money of teenagers so it was associated as a negative place now.

But even for all that, I, who loved games, rushed to game centers the moment I had pocket change...

Anyways, near the end of the year 1987, various Game Centers started displaying discomfort. The reason was because of the game, “Street fighter” that utilized 6 buttons, had been released.

Why did players feel discomfort in playing fighting games that

required a coin input? That was because of the number of buttons.

For the generic arcade game, 4 was the most number of buttons that could be found.

No, 2~3 was usually enough so even 4 was outside of the comfort zone for many players. But one fighting game appeared out of the blue that utilized 6 buttons, so Game Centers had no choice but to import specialized machines.

However, the controls were riddled with bugs so “Street Fighter” quickly shrunk in popularity after its release.

There was definitely skills like the force palm and uppercut that could be executed, but no matter how hard you turned the lever, the skill did not fire.

Additionally, players weren’t able to digest the new (Strong, medium, light) system that adjusted the power of attacks.

In the end, the sequel completely overhauled the first release and was able to garner a staggering amount of popularity.

“Director, are you perhaps suggesting a 6 button system because of Street Fighter alone?”

“Why? Is there a reason I can’t? Haha...”

“Of course there isn’t, but putting 6 buttons in the front might overwhelm the children...”

“Who said the 6 buttons had to be in the front?”

“What? Then where would the rest of the buttons...”

Fortunately, there was a Family controller laying on my desk so I handed it to Kimura as I spoke.

“Try holding it.”

“Yes...? Ah, okay.”

Kimura received the controller in his hand and both his index fingers naturally shot up at the top of the controller. I grinned and continued.

“Stop~! Exactly right there. We’ll make a button in the part your index finger is touching.”

“Ah~~~!!!! Here...”

Kimura wasn’t able to answer and repeatedly nodded his head and returned to his seat.

Now~ This task is finished. Is Psychic Battle next on the list? I

stood up from my stat and walked up to Morita who was busy working on mapping pixels.

“Morita, how’s illustrating going?”

“It’s going smoothly. The work is enjoyable. I’m almost shouting in wonderment at your making the characters all girls, Director Kang~!!”

“Is... Is that so?”

“I believe, that one day, anime girls and sexy-concept characters will dominate the gaming world~!!”

Oddly enough, illustrator Morita’s undying passion for seeing ahead of the era almost made me wonder if he was a true pioneer. (He never draws male characters.)

His ability to flesh the unique traits of individual characters in pixels was also a huge help.

“Yo Morita, Can you shut your mouth and get back to work?”

“Sorry Hayashi, I must’ve distracted your coding session...”

Hayashi, who hadn’t responded to Morita’s apology and went back to coding, was an incredible worker bee who was unmatched in coding. But he had a bit of social networking problems due to his



personality...

He wasn't a fit for Mr. Shige's casual-family working environment where joke popping was frequent. Hayashi had an obsession to see the completion of every projects like the sharpness of a chainsaw and couldn't bear to see other employees slacking. That was the reason why he had dissension with Shige's development team.

So I took these two top grade otakus under my wing.

One was a pixel drawing machine who couldn't stop his obsession with fantasy girls, the other was a coding machine who couldn't stand imperfection...

“But Director, will it really be alright to develop according to your script? It would overload the family console, it would never be able run it...?”

“It doesn't matter. Leave the backend to me and focus on finishing the coding.”

Thereafter, Morita asked me a question.

“Director, the idea that you talked about before... Are we really going through with that?”

## Chapter 37 : Case By Case (5)

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“Why? You don’t think you can do it?”

“N No~!! I can. It’s just it’ll cause a bit of a headache for me if I can’t claim any responsibility...”

“On the contrary, the current situation is precisely the reason why you should do it. We will have no answer when we get hit with a legal sanction so please proceed. I will bear all of the responsibility.”

“Yes sir~!!”

“Morita... Your voice is too loud...”

“Ah, sorry. Hayashi...”

Although I am anticipating what kind of shooting game these 2 otaku’s will brew up...

&

After this incident, Mr. Shige and I encountered each other in the halls but seldom exchanged greetings.

It was like this before with Dragon Warrior too; Mr. Shige was incredibly sensitive with the topic of games. Even at the

presentation conference, the way he gazed at me was akin to staring at a rival rather than work colleagues.

In truth, I wasn't disappointed with Mr. Shige's response. From another point of view, it could be said that the best developer in Mintendo was acknowledging me as a rival...

Nevertheless, how many units did Super Marigee sell again?

I was bored being alone at home, so I opened up my Game & Watch device out of curiosity. Before long, the melodious theme music rippled out of the device as if it was waiting in anticipation.

-Ba-Bam~ Hidden mission cleared. You've completed the 'Secret game developer'. Ensuingly, you will gain a 200% increase in recognition when you reveal your identity amongst gamers.-

-Ba-Bam~ A new game 'Psychic Battle' is in development. Viewing the status of the employees working on the project is possible-

-Ba-Bam~ Mr. Yamagauchi from your company, Pentagon, has begun the development for Final Frontier 2.-

-Ba-Bam~ Kumamoto Shigeru of Mintendo is harboring a fiery competitive spirit towards you.-

Small happenings that occurred in the game industry all popped up as notifications since the last time I used the device. After checking off a few important notifications, I looked up the

information about Super Marigee 3 in the search bar.

<Super Marigee 3: Released as a Family-exclusive game, it has garnered over 40 million sales from around the world. This is data from the retail cartridges sold by Mintendo.>

Holy... To think that the retail sales alone were 40 million, unbelievable...

I let out a small sigh at the tremendous sales figure of Super Marigee 3 as I picked up the telephone receiver and started turning the dials. After a brief tone, a man's voice was heard.

"Who's you?"

Who's you... what kind of manners is that? I took a brief moment to gather myself before speaking.

"Mr. Pumala, is Chandra available?"

"Chandra is work. Want to speak?"

"Yes, please."

A moment later, Pumala's unintelligible murmurings were heard and the voice of Chandra followed soon after.

“Is this Junhyuk? We have nothing to do nowadays after making the promised cartridges. We have to work to send money back home. Is there anything we can do?”

“That’s exactly why I called. Chandra, I want to request something from you.”

“Request~? Chandra will do any request Kang Junhyuk has. What kind of fun idea are you cooking up again?”

“Hear me out before telling me if you can do it or not.”

“Okay, tell me.”

After hearing my explanation, Chandra replied in a bright tone.

“That’s possible~!! Chandra can do that.”

“Really? That’s great then.”

“But there is one problem, Kang Junhyuk. It’ll be hard to go into mass production with that method. It’s too difficult to match Mintendo’s production rate in Chandra’s small workshop.”

Of course... It was not a workload which could be done in the confines of a pen-like environment without even proper ventilation and a minimal number of employees.

This was a bit earlier than I'd planned, but it wasn't a bad period to progress my plans. I quickly took out a memo pad and grabbed a pen.

“Chandra, call out a list of the production machineries that you'd need.”

“Mng? Why is that?”

“Uh, I've decided to set up a factory.”

“What!?”

The economy of Japan in 1987 was already more or less bloated to it's fullest, and had begun it's waning process. This process had already begun after the threat of the 'Plaza Convention' in 1985.

The Japanese government had been regulating the Japanese currency value when all of a sudden, they consented to the ridiculous proposal by America: “The dollar has to be stabilized in order to revive the world economy.” This resulted in the disastrous outcome of a decline in the value of the Japanese Yen by a half.

Following the Korean war, Japan had re-emerged as a country of major exports and received the support of allied countries to become the 2nd ranking nation in the world. However, the Plaza Convention had caused the value of the Yen to drop beneath the dollar known as the “Yen Incident” and their export companies overseas had been steadily falling like dominoes starting from last

year.

To try and recover from this sudden development, the Japanese government makes a terrible move again...

&

I was able to acquire a production factory facing bankruptcy with the same strategy I used to take over Triangle Soft.

This place was actually one of the many low-level subcontracted companies producing cartridges for Nintendo, and President Yamauchi had also been waiting for the company to bankrupt itself.

“What!! The Raitex factory had been bought!? Who!! What bastard was it!!”

“I have no clue. I don’t know the specifics but the Raitex owner declared that he wasn’t the owner anymore.”

“Fucking hell!! I planned to buy it after it went completely bankrupt~!!”

“I told you that it would’ve been for the best to buy it when the competitive rates were up than waiting too much...”

“Shut your mouth!!”

Crash!! President Yamauchi must've been genuinely mad as he threw the ashtray from his desk across the room and started a tantrum. Mr. Gunpei was trying his best to calm him down.

Now... Now... I came here to meet Mr. Gunpei regarding Psychic Battle, but this mood is too lively. Of course, I was the one who caused it...

“This won't do... Even If I'll have to suffer some losses, I will acquire the rest of the factories before they get snatched up.”

“President, that's...”

Seeing Gunpei's perplexed expression, President Yamauchi's face started to pale.

“N..No way...”

“Yes. It's the same situation with 2 other factories we had in our list.”

“How could this be~ fuck!!! Who the hell was it!! Find this damned bastard immediately!!!”

“Y..Yes, sir.”

“Huff... Huff”



President Yamauchi started gulping water as if trying to simmer down his burning insides, but he was still huffing after. Maybe it'd be better to come back later... I silently shook my head as I walked out of the President's room.

A moment later, Mr. Gunpei came over to my New Console Development department with a very tired look on his face. I handed a cup of cold water to him as I asked.

“Why is President Yamauchi fuming like that?”

“It's completely understandable. He lost a prey that he'd been stalking while trying to save a few pennies...”

“Prey?”

“Due to the huge success of the Family cartridges, our own factories aren't able to keep up with the demand. So we'd been assigning work to various small-scale factories, but the number of factories closing down is ever increasing due to the economy...”

“Ah... So President Yamauchi had been trying to wait until the factories closed down.”

“That way, he could purchase them at the clearance price... But a strange event happened.”

“A strange event?”

“Someone had bought these factories that were on the verge of closing down. On top of that, they had also taken care of the workforce for the companies so the owners were head over heels when they sold it. This person seems to possess a large amount of financial capital. The problem is, this person mass bought these factories but left the operations to the previous owners. The factory owners wouldn't open their mouth as if they swore a vow even if I asked them so...”

“That really is a big problem...”

That's... Because I'm busy and I can't manage them from over here... In truth, not even those factory owners had met me face to face. Buying all the factories were taken care of through attorney Nakamura, who'd helped me with taking over Triangle Soft in the past.

Mr. Nakamura had cautioned me against investing too much money in a depreciating business, but foreseeing the obvious outcome of these factories not being managed well if I hired new workers, I purchased the entire factory's labor force along with their owners to avoid the hassle of management.

Thanks to that, about 3,000,000 Yen had been taken out of my balance in a month, but it didn't matter. The reason was because I would recover about 1,000,000 soon enough. How would it come in? Just like this.

“But Kang-kun, what is the topic that you wanted to discuss?”

“Ah, I want to ask something regarding Psychic Battle from you, Mr. Gunpei.”

“Ah~ You’re talking about the last game from the presentation conference. Even at a glance, it truly seems like an amazing game. But from what the Inventions people are telling me, it’s impossible to implement with the current Family hardware. Is that true?”

“Mm~ about half of that is true.”

“I didn’t think the Kang-Kun that I know would start something without future thinking, but half? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I need a specialty chip that will boost the capabilities of the Family.”

“A specialty chip? Where do you plan to put it in?”

“Of course, it’ll be inside the cartridge. It’ll be an apparatus that would increase the calculation speed of the Family device.”

“Hmm~ This is... Theoretically possible. But it hasn’t ever been implemented before...”

“That’s fine. I know a company that can produce this specialty chip.”

“Really? Who are they?”

“They’re a company called Raitex. I heard that Chandra, one of their employees, invented a specialty chip that could boost the capabilities of the cartridge.”

“Raitex!?”

“Wouldn’t you know about them, Mr. Gunpei? They’re one of our subcontracted companies...?”

“Raitex is one of the companies that President Yamauchi tried to absorb... If he’d acted a bit sooner, we would’ve acquired that technique for ourselves...”

In the end, Mintendo had no choice but to pay upwards of 1,000,000,000 Yen to mass produce this chip that could boost the performance of the cartridge.

Mr. Gunpei had spent several sleepless nights trying to copy the technique to making this chip, but the results were ultimately a failure due to the anti-copying system implemented by the Indian native.

President Yamauchi was opposed to the release of Psychic Battle that couldn’t be released with the conventional cartridges, but due to the popularity resulting from FamiTong Magazine’s advertising and the expectations of consumers, he couldn’t easily order a cease

in production.

“Kang-kun, do you really have the confidence that this game will scorch the floor? The price of production became too high after including your specialty chip or whatever, we’d have to sell at least a million units just to break even.”

“President Yamauchi...”

“Mmm? What is it...”

“Have I ever disappointed you before...”

“You’re right... The reception at the conference was great, and Shigeru is working incredibly hard after feeling the pressure from you. It’s expected to be a hit, but...”

“If you’re worrying that much, I’ll alleviate some of that for you.”

“Mmm? How?”

“I will only be using 1/10 the marketing fee of Super Marigee 3.”

# Chapter 38 : Unique Marketing (1)

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“You’re going to decrease the marketing budget? Psychic Battle is a new brand name, so it won’t sell well if it isn’t advertised... Is that really okay?”

“It’s fine.”

“What are you cooking up again... my expectations are high but still...”

“You can keep your expectations high. All you have to do is sit still and get ready to count money.”

And get ready to add more orders of the specialty chips to Raitex, too. I grinned in my head as I came out of his office.

“Kang Junhyuk...”

As I lifted my head at my name, Mr. Shige walked down the opposite hallway towards me. Mr. Shige was also coming to give a report to President Yamauchi, holding approval documents in his hands. He looked at the approval files in my hands and asked.

“Did you give your report already?”

“I did just now. How’s the development going with Super Marigee 3?”

“Nothing for you to worry about, it’s going without any hitches. From what I’m hearing, you’re making a special cartridge for Psychic Battle?”

“Yes... You’ve also said that it was impossible to operate it with our current cartridge technology, Mr. Shige...”

“Slimy bastard, I’ve really been forced into a corner.”

“Oh? Are you finally surrendering?”

“Who said I was giving up~!! Just watch me. I’ll show off the best Super Marigee that the world has ever seen. I’ve been preparing as if it were my last Super Marigee game, as well as making diligent marketing arrangements~!!.”

“I’ll be anticipating the game. I truly believe you’ll come out with an amazing game, Mr. Shige.”

“Hng~ Flattery isn’t going to work. We will be talking with results~!!”

“Yes~ Then, see you at the release conference.”

I smiled and slightly lowered my head as I walked out of the office hallway.

&

A few days later, I grabbed a few of the illustrations of Psychic Battle to the game magazine press.

Just 2 years ago, FamiTong was the only specialty game magazine, but the number already grew to 4.

“Phew... Then should I start visiting them one by one?”

Holding the stuffed document bag, I visited the least popular of the four game magazines, Game Champ.

As I opened the office door and entered, the acrid smell of cigarette smoke that made a raccoon’s nest seem pleasant in comparison wafted over to me.

In this era, office smoking was a commonplace occurrence and almost every building had at least some hint of it, but this was a bit too strong... Just how much were they smoking?

“The smell is going to pollute my clothes, I better finish quickly and leave...”

I stepped into the office and was looking around when a half bald, seemingly good natured man walked up to me and asked. The weather was slowly encroaching the beginning of winter, but the man’s armpits were smeared with sweat-stains; he was the type to sweat a lot.



“How can I help you?”

“Ah, Hello. My name is Kang Junhyuk, from Mintendo. I came to request an advertisement for a new title coming up.”

“A... d..direct visit from Mintendo to our magazine? I’m the editor-in-chief of our Game Champ, Murasaki. Please, make yourself comfortable.”

Hmm, the brand Mintendo did have a quite a bit of name recognition after all. It was easy for me to easy myself in. But Murasaki(purple) is quite a unique name. Of course, it should have a different meaning in kanji... Anyways, I followed Editor Murasaki to the guest reception room.

“I enjoy many of the games released by Mintendo myself. What game are you here to advertise for? Could it possibly be Super Marigee 3, that’s currently in development?”

“Ah... Mr. Shige is working on Super Marigee 3 in absolute secrecy, so it’s not. It’s a game called Psychic Battle.”

“Psychic Battle... It’s Mintendo’s new IP that was first announced in FamiTong awhile back.”

“Yes, that’s right. I’m the head director of Psychic Battle, Kang Junhyuk.”

“I’ve heard of you before-a brilliant Korean employee working at Mintendo..”

In contrast to what had happened at Fox Soft, seeing this type of reaction after my name was mentioned meant that my reputation had definitely increased.

“Not at all, an overstatement...”

Phew, I want to get this small-talk out of the way and leave the building. It’s suffocating to breathe in here...

I hurriedly took envelopes containing illustrations for advertising out of my bag and handed them to Mr. Murasaki. In the brown envelope contained one more item aside from the illustrations; Mr. Murasaki must have been curious as he asked me while receiving the envelopes.

“Can I open it now?”

“Yes, go ahead.”

As I smiled and nodded my head, he took out the two illustrations from the envelope. The first page was the main illustration of ‘Aoi Chebasa’, the third character with blue-colored hair that Morita drew with extra care.

“Oh ho... This is truly an amazing quality picture. The charm is naturally exuding out of the character.”

The moment Mr. Mursaki, who was wearing an incredibly satisfied face, turned to the next illustration...

“Huuuppp~!!”

The second illustration depicted Aoi Chebasa-scarred and defeated by the enemy-staring right back at him. Contrary to the fully-clothed armor that she donned on the first page, pieces of her armour were breaking apart and clothes ripped, which emanated a borderline-cautionary sense.

“This, This is...”

“These are all for advertising purposes, Haha... What do you think?”

Psychic Battle itself was targeted more towards young adults rather than children.

The main reason was because of the addition of the specialty chip inside the cartridges, which resulted in the unit price being 7480 units. Mintendo had no choice but to focus their attention on attracting the older consumers who could afford this unusually high price.

Murasaki continued to repeatedly focus his gaze between the two pages of illustrations and lasciviously grinned.

Well~ If this is the reaction of the editor-in-chief, there won't be

any problems in making it to the magazine.

“This will be an unprecedented method of advertising that was never seen before. I’m thinking about using it as the front cover of our magazine.~!!”

“That would be great for us~ If it’s possible, please put the scar-wearing illustration of Aoi Chebasa behind the first illustration so the readers would immediately experience the stark contrast between them.”

“Oh~ Alright. But there is one more thing, we would have to know in-depth details about the game to write a review...”

“Please take out the cartridge inside the envelope.”

After my remark. Mr. Murasaki eagerly took the item out of the envelope. This very item was the Psychic Battle game itself, however, different from the common Nintendo cartridges, it’s shape was about 1.5 times bigger vertically.”

“Ah...? Could this game already be finished?”

“No, If I were to explain... it’s in its testing phase? I’m only giving these out to game reviewers such as yourself, you can enjoy up to stage 2 with this.”

“Ohh~!! A service like this in the world exists?”

“Well, you’re free to keep this cartridge here or raffle it out to your readers in an event. But remember to experience playing it yourself, and please leave an article for Psychic Battle in your next edition.”

“Yes, my coworkers and I will play it together and write an article on it.”

“I’ll leave it you. Then...”

In my haste to leave this raccoon’s nest as soon as possible, I forgot one question I had to ask; I asked a question to Mr. Murasaki.

“Urhmm, Editor-in-chief Murasaki, Excuse me for asking this, but what are the monthly sales for Game Champ?”

“We’re still a new magazine so we’re printing around 2,000 copies per month, but...”

“You should be able to print double that starting next month?”

“What?”

“If you trust me after playing the game, try increasing the magazine circulation. It’s sure to sell very well.”

“Huuh?”

I left this offbeat message as I walked out of the Game Champ headquarters.

“Puah~~ I thought I was about to die from suffocation...”

One of the most notable improvements I’ve made to myself was my cutback on smoking. Apart from the occasional sessions with Mr. Gunpei while chatting, I hadn’t actively smoked at all...

I took a moment to pat the smoke off my clothes and headed to the subway station.

I’ve only stopped by one magazine press when I’m... feeling... an intense bout of hunger. I became extremely famished here.

-Poong~Poong~Poong

... Why am I thinking of the documentary series ‘Excessive Eater’ from 2015 that I enjoyed watching, now...?

Anyways, I’ll be moving after I put something in my stomach first.

&

After lunch, I visited two other game magazines and repeated my procedure with Game Champ, the clock was nearing 4 PM.

The place that I was standing at was my final destination, FamiTong Magazine.

As I've already made an appointment with that Junpei bastard, I leisurely walked in through the front doors.

“Oh~ Junhyuk~ you came?”

“Give me water... I'm about to die from thirst.”

“You should've sent me the files by mail, why are you suffering needlessly?”

“But I'll make more connections with personal visits. It's miles better than sending it in by mail.”

“Hmm~ That's true... but being from Mintendo, you would only need to send in a package by mail for them to be obliged.”

“Is that right? Haha...”

“What's that?”

“Ah, an advertisement illustration specifically for FamiTong...”

“An advertisement illustration is an advertisement illustration, what’s with adding ‘specifically for FamiTong’?”

“That’s, the illustrations for each of the magazine press are different.”

“What did you say!?”

“I rolled my head around a bit.”

“Crazy... What did the other magazines say?”

“They all liked it saying they’ll use it as the main cover, why?”

“What!? Then we have no choice but to do that as well~!! Considering our relationship with Mintendo, you should’ve given everything to us~!!”

“Yeah.. I’ve actually created a unique character for you guys because of that.”

“Eng?”

The illustration that Junpei took out was an image of “Azesa Ren”, a Psychic Battle main character who was striking an alluring pose as if she was in the mood for seducing someone.”



“G..Give me a moment to wipe my nosebleed...”

“Yeah? Since you’re nose bleeding anyways, go ahead and looked at the second page too, and wipe it after...”

“Next... page? Puaaack~!! You!! Isn’t this too dangerous?”

If I described the pictures of the blue-haired Aoi Chebasa or the blonde Helena that I handed to the other magazines as being given special care by Morita, then wouldn’t Azesa Ren be the definition of pouring one’s soul into a masterpiece?

Of course, images of this calibre couldn’t be displayed with the current Family, but everything depended on imagination. The lackluster effects of the 8-bit game would be filled by the imaginations of the gamers...

Regulations regarding video games haven’t been made yet, so unless a game was specifically made to fulfill erotic needs, most games drew a conservative line around rated R topics.

For that reason, teen comics like Dragon Ball and 3×3 Aiz used this method to draw the attention of readers. (Ex: The scene of the priest constantly bombarding various girls to see their undergarments, or that to obtain a dragon ball, Bulma had to show his panties when he actually wore nothing...)

“Alright, you can stop looking now. You’re going to drill a hole in

the paper, you gnome...”

“Truly baffling... wait? But saying that all magazines will put each of the different characters on their front cover is...?”

“Yup, the main theme for all game magazines next month will be Psychic Battle.”

## Chapter 39 : Unique Marketing (2)

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“Wow~ You really are... kicking ass.”

“Kicking ass~?! It’s called an outstanding marketing skill~!!”

On top of that, if the customers wanted to collect all these illustrations, they had no choice but to purchase the magazines from these 4 locations~ The magazine companies would benefit in their own right, and the news would spread from the word of mouth. Killing two birds with one stone... I took a sip from the cup Junpei gave, and I beamed.

“Aii? This is a game cartridge?”

“It’s a game cartridge for experimental purposes. You will be able to enjoy up to stage 2 with this.”

“Oh~ That’s great news to hear. All of the other reviewers were interested in Psychic Battle too... But this is a bit bigger than a regular cartridge...?”

“I’ve implemented a specialty chip inside that will improve the performance...”

“Ah~ That’s why it’s so idiotically fat... But I do feel a certain pull from it too~ Then should I play it? “

“You’re planning to try it out now?”

“Why not? It’ll be exposed to other reviewers~ Good?”

“Whatever you say~”

As soon as Junpei left the reception room, he shouted to his co workers that were busy working.

“Oi~! The game that I’ve been harping about until my mouth dried up, the experimental cartridge for Psychic Battle has arrived!! Whoever mocked me for dying at the first stage, come out!!”

“Oh~? Psychic Battle~!? Me~! I’ll give it a try!!”

The experimental Psychic Battle cartridge was able to instantly garner the peaked interest of the FamiTong employees. A moment later, they gathered around the small TV screen and began galvanizing their tongue as the projectile-barrage scene came on.

“Spin the cross key and press the B key.”

Junpei was standing over to the side throwing out snide remarks with a smirk on his face to his friends who were dying before the half-mark of the first stage.

“F..Fuck, Why is this so hard?”

“I was the only person to reach the Boss Stage in the presentation conference, alright? I told you it was shockingly hard, didn’t I? Move to the side, I’ll show y’all how it’s played.”

Junpei grabbed the controller that his co worker threw in frustration, pushed him away, and he took a seat.

“Now~!! Come watch my out-of-the-world plays!!”

Compared to the other employees, Junpei did have some talent. After deducing that the barrage would become increasingly more focused the longer he stayed in one spot, Junpei darted across the stage and avoided the incoming projectiles.

Even though the total number of barrage was calibrated to be capped at a certain value, there were moments where the frames per second would be lowered, though it did not noticeably impact the gameplay experience.

“It seems much more stable than before, the frames aren’t plunging as much.”

“Of course. The software was tidied up as well. There are some frame drops here and there, but the code is the most efficient it could possibly be.”

A while later, Junpei faced off against the insect boss of the first stage again.”

“I will pay back the debt that I owed you!!”

This Junpei bastard wasn't going to fall for the same patterns again. After the barrage of projectiles had set in again and the frames started to fall, he anticipated the killer move of the boss and hurriedly maneuvered his character to the end of the screen to avoid the deathly laser.

In the end, Junpei's play had defeated the first boss, and he used the momentum to attack the second stage.

“Oraahhh!!!!”

He activated the barrier skill and proceeded with caution but with the addition of the spinning projectiles, the difficulty became much harder. No matter how good the player was, they wouldn't be left with much HP by the time they reached the second boss.

“Would it be possible to clear this?”

Contrary to Junpei's expectation of another gigantic monster appearing, a psychic boss with similar characteristics to the main character appeared.

“The second boss is a psychic user just like me~!! I have a chance!!”

Different from the gigantic boss of the first stage, a huge smile was plastered on Junpei's face after seeing a humanoid boss appear. He thinks it'll be easier because there is more space to evade? Seeing the overconfident self of Junpei, a grin was drawn on my face as well.

‘Let's see if anyone can clear the second stage before the full game is released.’

Junpei lightly shifted to the side to dodge an attack of the boss while simultaneously punching in the commands to fire a homing laser beam that chased the target. At that instant... Shroop!!!! Just before the laser beam made contact with the bewitching boss, it vanished.

“Teleportation!!!!”

As Junpei desperately attempted to make distance with the boss who appeared right behind, he couldn't escape the magnetic pull of the boss. Following the humongous combo laser attack of the boss perfectly hitting Junpei's 'Azesha Ren'...

“Heukkkk!!!!!!”

As the scene of the scar-filled Azesha Ren's desperate pose was displayed, everyone collectively gasped. Compared to the illustrations that I'd handed to Junpei, the scene was a bit milder, but it was clear that the previous image was overlapping with the current one in Junpei's mind.

“Pieces of clothing come off when she’s hit by the boss’s attack... Vice versa, if the boss is hit with the special skill of her character...”

Ensuingly. A reporter who was sitting beside me had cut me off, and he tightly grabbed Junpei’s hands and spoke.

“Junpei, I’m begging you. You must defeat the second boss with your special ability.”

“Woahhhhhh!!!!”

It’s incredibly easy to predict males... What was the big deal about a piece of clothing flying off... In reality, the “pieces-flying-off” concept had already been introduced in game centers with the popular “Golden Castle” game.

One had to dodge the incoming magic spells with a shield using high, middle, and low commands to proceed. Being hit with spells would cause pieces of armour to fly off.

The only problem was the character was a male... However, the scene of the players at the game center collectively cheering on to remove the clothing of the female enemy knight came into my mind, and I let out a smirk.

Of course, with the current specs of the Family console, it would be too much to express the full graphical scenes of the flying clothing so I had to make do with the cover illustrations. However,



the reception of the concept itself was tremendous here as well...

---

“Planning to go so soon?”

“Yup, I have an appointment with someone soon. Enjoy the game and make sure to write a nice article.”

“Don’t worry about the article~ It’ll be a spectacular piece of writing~!!”

“Alright, thanks.”

“There’s one thing... Junhyuk.”

“Hmm?”

Junpei was wearing an awkward expression and scratched his head unlike his usual self, making me a bit apprehensive. What was it? Was there a problem with my Psychic Battle??

“You told me you’d given different illustrations for each the characters to the four magazine press, right?”

“Yeah... Why??”

“There are only three main characters in the game, was one of them illustrations of the telekinetic second stage boss, Catherine?”

“Yeah. Why?”

“Who did you give that illustration to?”

“I handed it over to Game World before coming here...”

“Arghhh~!! You should’ve given that to us instead!!!”

“.... Was she your ‘type’?”

What... He made that serious expression just because of this...? This man, he was into the dominant female fetish... I smirked at the bothered Junpei.

“Don’t worry. I’ll talk to my employees and have them send you all four sets.”

“R..Really?”

“Yes~ bastard.”

“Okay~!!! You were being a little idiotic, but, since the game is so good, I’ll write you a great review~!!”

“Then, I’ll be heading out now~”

I looked at my wristwatch and saw the time almost nearing the appointment, I quickly started heading to the subway station, waving to Junpei.

“Contact me when you arrive at Kyoto~”

“Alright man, break a leg~”

---

-We will be arriving to Shibuya... Shibuya station in a moment.-

Instead of the robotic announcer, the raggedy voice of the subway operator rang out through the speaker.

‘This homely feeling is something I can get used too..’

I prepared to get off the subway holding my lightened business bag.

I wouldn’t be late, but it’s pretty close? I have 5 minutes left until the appointment...

Chik... I ran towards the stairs as soon as the subway doors opened. The station was bustling with activity six in the afternoon.

‘It’s packed in here... Right, it’s when people get off work.’

The symbolic meet-up location of Shibuya station was the Hachigong mound.

In this era, there was a certain feeling of elation in meeting up with a person. Should I say it’s the excitement of choosing a time and location and waiting?

Handheld phones were non-existent, much less a mobile phone, so it was impossible to know where the other person was; however, with this inconvenience came a certain air of excitement and anticipation.

Even though I was a bit late... I glanced at my wrist watch again and came out of the station. The famous Hachigong mound was already filled with people looking at their watches and waiting for someone. And I was easily able to find Yuki amongst the group of people.

“Ah~!! Mr. Junhyuk~”

Yuki saw me through the moving crowd and welcomingly waved her hand. We’ve only had a brief encounter at the Dragon Emblem conference, but I’m feeling pretty good to be greeted like this?

“It’s been awhile.”

“Ah... yes. How have you been?”

“I really thought you’ve forgotten about me after no contact after our first call. I haven’t gotten the chance to ask for your number, so I couldn’t call either...”

“Sorry. I was too busy with work...”

“But thank you for not forgetting me and contacting me.”

As she lowered her head and greeted me. I also reflexively lowered my back.

“N, not at all.”

“Should we go somewhere to eat some food while we talk?”

“Sure. But I’m not familiar with Shibuya, so I don’t have any recommendations.”

“Hmm~ then should we stop by a convenience store first?”

Yuki and I stood over the symbol of Shibuya, the bridge, and we smiled at each other. Yuki possessed a great sense of intuition for a girl in the 1980s.

The current popular trend amongst girls was tying their hair

with a white headband and giving it a wave at the end which gave off a neat feeling instead of the old-fashioned curly hair.

And the dimples forming on her face every time she smiled was a charming as well..

“Waw~ Shibuya has quite the crowd.”

“It’s much more lively than Kyoto, isn’t it?”

“Oh? How did you know I was based in Kyoto?”

“You said you were working for Mintendo. Isn’t the headquarter based in Kyoto?”

“Ah... You know well.”

Ding Dong~

Ding Dong~

A moment later, as the notification rang out along with the traffic light turning green, the multitude of people moved at once through the wide road.

Looking at the scene of the people swarming to the Shibuya station, I’m being reminded of the game “Three pronged legend”

from 2000 that I used to enjoy.

Defeating hundreds with one warrior brought me great joy, but a game like that would take some time to be developed?

That game was released along with SenSony's Gear Station 2... It would come out approximately 15 years from now.... Wait a moment, no. There is no need to wait that long...?

“Mr. Junhyuk?”

“Ah, yes?”

“We... should be going this way?”

“Ah, sorry. I was lost in thought...”

“Hmm...”

Yuki made a flustered expression for a brief moment before moving her foot again. Now.... I'm going to get hate from all over for being immersed in games day and night. I suppressed my inventor's spirit, and I followed her back.

## Chapter 40 : Unique Marketing (3)

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A moment later. The place that Yuki brought me over to was a Korean restaurant in Shibuya. The name of the store was 'Mother's Table', a bit strange title.

"This is...?"

"You're a Korean, Mr. Junhyuk. I asked my Korean friends and they said this was the best place in Tokyo, I thought you'd like it..."

"Ah~"

My chest tightened with gratitude in response to Yuki's thoughtfulness. I felt like a loser for arriving without any preparation and having work-related thoughts on this date...

"Do you not like Korean cuisine?"

"Not at all~ It's a welcoming change of pace for me. There aren't many Korean restaurants in Kyoto so my meals are filled with Udon or Ramen. You've put a lot of thought into this, thank you,"

In response, Yuki smiled and muttered to herself.

"It's a relief..."



As Yuki and I stepped into the restaurant, the nostalgic aroma of bean-paste soup and the sizzling Bulgogi in the grill started to pervade my dietary track.

I've only had a noodle bowl for lunch because of the meetings with the magazine companies, so I was in a famished state.

“Welcome~”

‘Mother’s Table’ had the unique tradition of greeting customers in Korean; With a sentimental mind, I also greeted in Korean to the lady behind the counter.

“Hello~”

“Ohh~!! You’re a Korean~”

“Yes, my date here brought me to this place recommending it as the best eatery in Tokyo.”

“Aiigo~ Thank you very much~ It’s so welcoming to see a fellow Korean in a foreign land~ I’ll add an extra serving of Bulgogi to your table. Enjoy~”

“We will, thank you.”

As we were conversing in Korean, Yuki was staring at us with a blank expression and twinkling eyes.

“The lady said she was happy to meet me.”

“At~ Is that so. She seems to like you.”

After we sat across the table and poured each other a glass of water, we ordered 2 servings of Bulgogi and bean paste soup. Seeing the seemingly basic meal, Yuki asked with a worried expression.

“Would that be enough? You told me you’ve only had a bowl of noodle today.”

“This is your first time at a Korean restaurant, Ms.Yuki?”

“Yes. I’ve only heard of it from my friends; this is my first time.”

“Just you wait~ A shocking event will happen soon.”

A moment later. Seeing the table being filled with side dishes, Yuki asked the server in confusion.

“E..Excuse me, We haven’t ordered these?”

“These are all Okazu (Side dishes). These come along with the main course, don’t worry~”

“These...these are all Okazu?”

Mmm... Is the owner from the Chollado region? Food from that region tastes delicious and meals are fulsome~

On the table, acorn jello, Kimchi pancake, Kalbi and other side dishes were being brought in.

“Wow... Do Koreans really eat this much?”

“Ah... It’s not always like this, but we do have a higher side dish count than Japan.”

“That’s amazing The food delicious too!!”

Thankfully, Yuki must have liked the food as a continuous stream of food was entering a mouth.

She had a coughing fit when eating the bean-paste soup which was a lot spicier compared to Japan’s miso soup, so I quickly handed her a glass of water.

“Sp...Spicy.”

There is a clear difference from Japan’s bean-paste soup~ Yuki was trying her hardest to suppress her coughing fits.

With the addition of Bulgogi being placed onto the sizzling grill, the table was filled to the brim with no space to spare.

“They serve so much food, yet it’s only 380 yen per person...”

“Koreans naturally have a lot of generosity~”

I was overwhelmed by the nostalgic taste of Korea that I haven’t experienced in a long time, and hurriedly began shoving food into my mouth.

“Mistress~ One more rice bowl please~”

“Oh my? You’ve already finished it? I’ll bring it over in an instant.”

The head server nodded her head and took my order.

&

“Ah~ I’m full.”

“Didn’t you eat too much? You’ve ate almost three servings of rice...?”

“I must’ve been too greedy after not having seen Korean food in a long time.”

“I’m feeling great after seeing you eat so well too, haha.”

“All thanks to you. You’ve brought me to this wonderful restaurant. Here, I’ll take care of the bill.”

“What? Why would you?”

“Mmm...? I mean, well... because...”

“I have money too? Excuse me, please give us a split bill.”

Not giving me any chance to speak, Yuki headed to the counter with the receipt. Mmm... I thought we were supposed to pay for the first date, I guess there is a slight difference in customs.

After we split the bill and stepped out, it was already dark. We’re both full, but what was the point of leaving after a just a meal...

“Should we go get some coffee to cool our stomachs down? I’ll buy the coffee.”

“What? Why are you trying to buy everything...”

“I ate three servings~ We split the bill in half so you suffered tremendous losses Yuki; let me buy the coffee.”

In response, Yuki stifled a laugh and nodded her head. Gah~ It's so hard to buy her a cup of coffee...

Soon after, we moved our bodies to a nearby coffee shop.

&

“Have a nice time~”

The waiter handed us the coffee and left holding the platter. Hmm... A luxurious coffee shop like this actually serves their coffee in a cup and a waiter serves it... This is something that couldn't be imagined in the cafes in the 2000s.

There is definitely a difference in atmosphere from picking one's order after they called your name... And seeing the coffee that was served in a ceramic instead of a paper cup truly differentiated the mood of the 1980s...

“How busy are you lately? After your first call, you haven't contacted me for a while...”

“Ah... I'm currently in the process of developing a game.”

“A game? Wow~ What type of game is it?”

“Ah, that's... Um...”

No!!! I can't say it~!! How am I supposed to explain the theme of sexy female characters traversing the skies while getting half their clothes ripped off when they're hit~!!

In the end, I took out the picture of 'Ryuwha Young' (Who had the most conservative attire out of the characters) and showed it to her.

Yuki was the first person to see this image, as I haven't released it to anyone else yet.

Ryuwha Young was a covert character that wore a black outfit with a mask that covered half her face.

Below the mask was a perky lip and a gorgeous bodyline enhanced by the skin-tight outfit, making her my favorite character in Psychic Battle.

The main characters of Psychic Battle: fireworks mage 'Azesha Ren', martial artist 'Helena' and tempest caller 'Aoi Chaibasa' were already finalized, but after a player beat the game, they were able to play as the enemies that appeared in story and battle mode.

The 2nd boss, telekinetic user 'Catherine', 5th stage boss, explosion boss 'Jennifer', and especially the last stage 8 boss, 'Ryuwha Young' was personally designed by Morita and I.

I felt a greater attachment to Ryuwha than even Azesha Ren and planned to give her a set of cheat-like abilities deserving of the last

boss.

“The character is really pretty, is she a female main character?”

“Actually, every single character in this game are female. The game is a type of shooting game that focuses on the battle between psychic users.”

“Ah, is that so. If it’s a shooting game, there’s flying around everywhere and shooting missiles, right?”

“Mmm, you got the gist.”

“I love aircraft games so much~ I frequently visit arcades to play ‘1942’ too; I must! play your game after release.”

I looked at Yuki who was talking with a determined expression on her face and muttered in a tiny voice.

“Haha... You don’t have to do that...”

“What did you say?”

“It’s nothing... I was talking to myself. By the way, do you still have the Dragon Emblem cartridge that I gave you?”

“Ah~ right.”



Yuki took out a copy of Dragon Emblem and its cartridge and placed it on the table.

“I’ve had a great time playing it thanks to you. As you already know, I’ve also had the opportunity to enjoy the additional scenarios. I want to give it back to as repayment.”

“You want me to take it back?”

“Yes, I’ve enjoyed the game so much~ You might not have had the chance to play because you’re so busy.”

It’s not something like a ring or a necklace. Asking me to safeguard a game cartridge with care, I feel a bit strange. I awkwardly smiled and asked her a question.

“What kind of job do you have, Miss Yuki? Last time I saw, you were great at gaming? You were one of the last to survive amongst the various players in the Dragon Emblem.”

“I enjoyed playing chess since I was young; I used to play with my father quite often. As soon as I saw a game called Dragon Emblem, my curiosity led me to buy it straightaway. Ah~ and I work at a broadcasting station.”

“A broadcasting station?”

“Yes, but I’m only the provisional scriptwriter for now.”

“Excuse me, but do you mind me asking your age...?”

“19. My birthday was last week.”

“Ah, it’s late but happy birthday.”

Nineteen... It should be about 21 in Korean age? It’s definitely an adult, but the tender age of 19 greatly perplexed me. I nodded my head in acknowledgement as I moved the coffee cup to my mouth.

“How about you?”

“I’m... 25.”

I briefly recalculated my age in my head before replying. Now that I think about it, four years have passed since I had set my age to 21 and time-travelled to the year 83... Time is flying by quickly.

“Woah.. You’re younger than I’d expected?”

“Pfft... You think I look old?”

“Something about you seems a bit different from the 20 years olds that I know...”

“How am I different?”

“A normal person in their 20s would be clueless in society after just graduating from college, but you have a mature air about you? In all honesty, I thought you would be in your late 20s at the youngest estimate.”

Were my mannerisms from 2015 interpreted like this? On the outside, I was 25 years old, but 38 on the inside. Yuki isn't wrong at all, I smirked and nodded my head.

“There's only one month left until the end of this year, the 88 olympics are being held in Korea next year, do you plan on returning?”

“I don't know. My job is in Japan, so I wouldn't be moving back. I plan to get a brief vacation to visit.”

“Are your parents in Korea?”

My hands which were raising the coffee cup stopped at Yuki's question. Parents. How were they doing...? When I get my vacation, what would it be like to visit my hometown? I was 7 years old in the year 88... I was probably living south of Seoul at this time...

“Mr. Junhyuk...?”

“Yes, my parents are in Korea. I'll be stopping by to visit them

while I go to the Seoul olympics...”

As I replied with a grin, Yuki stopped asking about family matters. Instead, she took out a diary from her bag and started writing something.

# Chapter 41 : Unique Marketing (4)

---

“What’re you doing?”

“I want to jot down information about the restaurant. Before I forget...”

“Before you forget?”

“There’s a competition for an idea for a program targeted at new writers.”

“A competition?”

“Yes, it’s for a new variety program or a short 2~30 minute drama, and I plan to submit food as my topic for the competition.”

Food? Is she talking about those Mukbang(watching people eat) dramas that were trending in 2010? Yuki opened her diaries wide open and started drawing the foods that we ate one by one.

I leaned my body against the table and watched her.

A moment later. Yuki started transcribing the foods that were served, in order, on top of the white paper.

“That’s amazing. You memorized all that while we were eating?”

“People did tell me that I had a great memory ever since I was little.”

Yuki didn't stop her hand movements even as she shyly smiled. As the picture was nearing completion, Yuki asked me a question.

“Mr, Junhyuk, what was that shiru that we ate earlier?”

“It's called the Dwenjjang Chige(soybean paste stew).”

“DenJwan Chige... what about the meat?”

“Those are the Yeontan-Bulgogi(barbeque briquettes).”

“Yeontan Burugogi...”

I couldn't hold in my laughter after watching her cute self stumble with the pronunciations. In response, Yuki's face also lighted up as she opened her mouth.”

“I'm not saying it right, aren't I? Heh heh.”

“No, not at all. It's lovely.”

After Yuki had finished jotting down all the side dishes, Yuki closed her diary with a refreshed face.

“Can I see what you wrote?”

“It’s embarrassing, I have not finished conceptualizing it yet so...”

“Don’t you know ideas are better when shared with more people?”

“It’s not about that...”

Yuki embarrassedly lowered her head and pushed the diary to me.

I received the diary and looked through the content while flipping through the pages.

Her diaries were full of detailed drawings of various eateries and specialty dessert shops and their foods in Tokyo, they were drawn in such detail that just seeing them made my mouth water.

Some entries had photos for reference attached to them which made viewing a treat. But in this time period, there shouldn’t be many people who took food pictures with a film camera?

On one drawing of a parfait was the shape of its container, ingredients, and even the height of the ice cream recorded in detail so it should be a great reference material.

One funny thing to note was next to every food picture, a egg-shaped character was rolling around making various strange faces.

“Wow... Everything’s recorded in detail.”

“Please give it back now~ please?”

“Wait a moment. Just a little more...”

As I was shuffling through the pages, I stopped my hands on one page. Instead of a food picture, there was a Nintendo cartridge drawn on it. The title of the game was ‘Dragon Emblem’, and drawn next to it was the egg character with a startled expression.

-The developer is a true genius~!! Who could’ve made this?-

-Mr. Junhyuk who cleared the game is also amazingl~!!-

“Ah~!! That’s!!”

Yuki quickly took the diary from my hands and put it back in her bag.

“Why are you so surprised?”

“I’m just embarrassed. Ah~ It’s getting hot.”



Yuki fanned her reddening face.

“You’re an unbelievable artist? Did you create the egg-character beside each food yourself? It seems to have many expressions.”

“Ah~ He’s Tamago-san (Mr. egg) I made him, and he’s rating the food with his face. What do you think?”

“I love it, it’s very unique.”

So it was reviewing the food like an emoticon. For this era, it was a very innovative concept. But Yuki’s expression was not very bright.

“Miss Yuki, do you have something on your mind?”

“Actually, I only have a few days until the competition, but I haven’t finished conceptualizing the program concept yet. I’ve set the genre to a specialty restaurant in Tokyo but just introducing the shop would be too bland so...”

“A specialty restaurant...”

At that instant, one drama episode that I was thinking of at lunch today flashed into my head again. I don’t know if a concept like that would work in the 80s... but trying it out wouldn’t hurt. It’s only a competition after all. With a serious expression, I rested my

head on both my hands and spoke to Yuki.

“Miss Yuki, I have a suggestion for you.”

“Yes? What...?”

As Yuki showed interest, I took out a notebook from my backpack.

Compared to Yuki’s neatly organized diary it was crude and messy, but I was the type to carry around a notebook to organize the ideas that popped into my head from time to time. (I also used it to help either Chandra or Mr. Gunpei understand something)

“Woah... It seems immensely complicated. Does it contain something like a compilation of your ideas, Mr. Junhyuk?”

“It’s not as neat as yours, Miss Yuki. But I do write my thoughts down from time to time. I tend to be forgetful when it’s not down on paper so...”

“You’re right, it’s a good idea to write your ideas down.”

“Anyways, this is the concept I was thinking of.”

I sketched an employee wearing a business attire on a random blank page. Yuki who was watching me draw replied with a soft voice.

“It’s a simple picture, but you communicate the concept well. I can clearly see that he’s a salary man?”

“Is that so? I’m not as great a drawer as you Miss Yuki, but this character will be important.”

“He will?”

“Yep, this man is always hungry. Let’s call him Onaka Suita-san (Mr. Hungry man)”

“Pfft...”

Yuki stifled in laughter at my choice of name.

“It’s a very good name for something you came up with just now, keke.”

“The producers can come up with a more suitable later. Anyways, the actor playing this character would go around restaurants and order various foods to try.”

“Ah~!! So the program would do more than simply introducing the store, it would show the actor eating the food as well.”

“It would be good to steer the program like a drama. The main character is an office employee who is on a business trip in Tokyo,

when he suddenly becomes famished and start wandering around.”

“And he would visit various restaurants and order foods?”

“Correct. The viewers at home would be able to visit the featured eateries themselves, and the owners would be happy from the advertisement too.”

“We would be able to introduce a restaurant to the viewers in a casual, more informal way~!! Killing two birds with one stone~”

Yuki thoroughly grasped the concept of my idea and continuously nodded her head.

The year 1987 was the year when color television was finishing up being in almost every household, so a variety of programs were flooding out.

Amongst them, cooking shows were able to display the colors of the food as opposed to the black and white screen, making it a big hit with women in the mornings which consistently rose it to the top rankings.

But there weren't any shows based on watching other people eat yet, which caused Yuki to become thrilled with my concept.

“A very innovative concept, I don't know how it'll go but I'll write a plan for it.”

“See? Two heads are better than one.”

In response, Yuki brightly smiled and nodded her head.

A while later.

After conversing for a little longer, we left the coffee shop and headed to the Shibuya station facing the chill autumn wind.

The clock was a little over 9 PM. There shouldn't be any trains headed to Kyoto, so should I settle in for the night at a hotel for today and stop by the Pentagon office tomorrow?

Kawaguchi's project 'Final Frontier 1' was a massive hit with over 20 million sales. The game developer added 'Final' into the title, determined to quit the industry once and for all if it went downhill again, but the game was a huge success and the sequel was already in development.

I had a phone conversation with him a few days ago, and he planned to target the sequel to a higher demographic steering towards an adult RPG... He wouldn't be developing a borderline theme like Psychic Battle would he?

While I was having random thoughts, Yuki who was walking beside me asked me a question.

“What should we do now?”

“Um? Ah... Weren’t we heading back?”

“It’s only 9 PM? Are you heading back to Kyoto now, Mr. Junhyuk?”

“No, I have business in Tokyo tomorrow so I’m going to be staying at a hotel tonight.”

“Mmm~ Then you do have time.”

“You’re right, haha. Do you have any particular place in mind we should go?”

In response, Yuki looked up at me and grinned before opening her mouth.

“Where would a man and a women go at this time of the night?”

“What...?”

Hiii.... It’s only our 2nd meeting? Is she an aggressive type contrary to her lady-like image? Miss Yuki grabbed my hand pulled me towards the intersection.

&

A moment later.

We were standing behind a building with neon-lights and blaring music.

“This is... that... Phew~~”

“What were you thinking of earlier, Mr. Junhyuk? You weren’t thinking of anything naughty, weren’t you?”

“Not at al~”

You were the one who made me think of these thoughts, this is not right...

As I lowered my head, Yuki opened the door to the Game Center while giggling.

Subsequently, various BGM music were blasted even to where I was standing. With some expectation, I raised my head to see if there were any motels on the 2nd or 3rd floor, but there were no such establishments.

Indeed, having an arcade on the 1st floor would not fare well for a motel. Amidst the flowing BGM of tetris from the interior, Yuki called out to me.

“There is a game that I’ve always wanted to play with you, Mr.

Junhyuk. Are you ready?”

“Ah, yes. Haha... With all my heart...”

I forcefully smiled towards Yuki and headed inside the Game Center.

Yuki must’ve found my reaction to be amusing as she covered her mouth and continuously chortled.

I’ve been tricked by you this time, but there won’t be a next time. I let go of my mislead mind and started freely looking around at the interior.

“This place is huge. There aren’t many like this in Kyoto... They have all the latest NEGA equipments too.

In recent times, the video game industry of Japan was undergoing a massive uprisal. In homes was the Mintendo Family, and in crowded urban areas were game centers like these; the influences of games were virtually everywhere.

If gamers wanted to enjoy a colorful and excellent quality graphics, they could only head to a game center. That was because the Family console at home couldn’t handle some of the higher end graphics.

Of course, as home entertainment systems received various improvements from 2000 onwards, game centers slowly started to



go downhill...

For the home consoles, RPG genres like Dragon Warrior and adventure stories that took a long time to complete were popular, so there was no negative impact on the game center business yet.

But in this era gamers were longing to play titles at the game center in their own homes, which were another major point of appeal for impactful game center games.

I've felt this before, but Yuki was truly a game enthusiast. There was a motorcycle game named 'Lucky' that had a open spot, and Yuki quickly tied her jacket onto her waist before hopping onto the simulation motorcycle.

## Chapter 42 : Unique Marketing (5)

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“You want to try this one?”

“Yes, do you want to do it with me, Mr. Junhyuk?”

“No, I’ll just be looking.”

She left her bag in the basket beside her and inserted 100 Yen into the coin slot of the machine.

Simulation machines tend to be more expensive than regular arcade machines. I can understand why NEGA makes a sizable income from these....

As she pushed the throttle for the motorcycle simulator, the game began.

I crossed my arms and watched Yuki play.

Hmm~ A simulation game... NEGA definitely has a firm standing in arcades.

The reason why NEGA hadn’t faced bankruptcy was because of their foundation in the arcade industry.

NEGA was the pioneer in these types of simulation games where players could experience — first hand — real life simulations. On

top of that, they had also invented the prize-claw machine which further boosted their revenue by a tremendous amount.

‘It’s no wonder why President Yamaguchi would be interested in this field. However, the cost for the initial infrastructure is too high, and per Mr. Gunpei and Mr. Shigeru’s predictions, this market would rapidly fall to the ground as home entertainment systems become more developed. It’s logical that he wouldn’t invest too much money.’

“Ah~ I was so close... I was only a few feet away from a checkpoint...”

These types of simulation racing games were designed to go on to the next stage after one reached the current checkpoint, resulting in a high coin consumption rate. I made a regretful expression on my face and handed Yuki her bag as I inquired.

“But you were pretty good? Ranking 8th on the scoreboard is amazing?”

“I’m pretty good, right? Ah~!! There’s an available seat over there.”

Yuki scurried over to the rather plain-looking machine and called out to me.

“Shall we try this out together?”

“Mmm?”

Ding~ Ding~ Ding~

BamBaBam BamBaBam BamBamBamBaBam~ BabaBam...

There was a certain background music that was currently trending with people on the streets humming the tune.

This addictive tune was from the game center entrance in the town; it had a peculiar rhythm to it that made people unable to forget once they heard it.

The main character of this crazy background music was a creation made from Japan's Daido Soft called the Bubble Boggle... But it was called the Boggle Boggle back in my country... It was explicitly written in the title as Bubble Boggle too...

I didn't know why bubbles were coming out of the little dragon's mouth instead of fire... Anyways, the playstyle of this game was to defeat your enemies by entrapping them in a bubble and popping it.

If the player took too long, a whale-ghost would appear to end the player while the background music would simultaneously change to one with a fast pace and make sweat exude from one's hands.

Furthermore, the character could be enhanced by eating various

items, such as shoes and candy, and there were many instances of allied players betraying each other to get those items.

Yuki covered her skirt with her jacket while pulling over a chair and sat on it.

As I had no choice but to sit down on the Player Two seat, Yuki grinned and spoke.

“Should we have a little competition over the game? The loser will have to grant one wish from the winner.”

We each amiably inserted the 50 Yen coin together and began the game.

There were 100 stages in the game which grew progressively harder the higher one went; honestly speaking, a boring sense of repetition would set in after stage 50.

However, it was a different story if we were betting on fulfilling wishes. Yuki and I furiously started tapping the buttons to defeat as many enemies as possible.

“Uh?”

Yuki's playstyle was demonically impish. As soon as I expended the effort to entrap the enemies in a bubble, she would dash over like a ghost and take care of them all. Not to mention, she even picked up all the banana and strawberry item drops after clearing

the stage to increase her score even more.

“Miss Yuki... You’ve clearly played this many times before?”

“Number 1 on the leaderboard is me~”

If leading me to this Game Center was the first trap, would this be the second? Then I definitely can’t lose here!! I immediately changed my playstyle and dominated with my presence by kill-stealing all of Yuki’s would-be prey.

In Bubble Boggle, I was able to hop over bubbles by timing my jumps within one frame, so I continuously pressed the jump button. At that moment, the boot item luckily dropped from above me. This item gives a 1.5x speed boost~!!

Yuki rushed over after seeing the boot drop, but she didn’t stand a chance.

“Ah, being selfish~!!”

“Where’s the selfishness in trying to win a competition~”

After acquiring the massive speed boost from the boots, I was able to pop every single enemy that Yuki had imprisoned. Wow~ I had completely forgotten about this game, but Bubble Boggle is extremely fun~!!

When I was young, I had almost gotten chased out of the store by reaching stage 100 with only the initial 50 Won fee, keke...

After remembering this memory, I chortled out loud to myself.

“Oh!! Candy~!!”

“Mine.”

“Argh!!”

Yuki was situated ahead of me at the start, but thanks to my wonderful boots, I quickly passed her and ate the candy. Eating a candy had the effect of increasing the range of shooting the bubbles~!!

After my consumption of the candy & boots, my blue dinosaur was no different from a peerless martial arts master. At stage 20, the difference in score between Yuki and I was over 1,000.

“I think it’s pretty much over now~ Miss Yuki~”

“Hnngh, I will never give up. Just you watch, I will definitely win~!!”

What kind of a personality is this? Her entire personality took a wild 180 degree turn after taking a hold of the steering wheel.

At that moment, the boot item descended from the sky once again and landed on the stage.

“Ah!! Boots!!”

“Mine.”

“You already have one, Mr. Junhyuk!!”

The system would add an additional 1000 points to your score after eating a second boot~ I rapidly ran over and snatched Yuki’s would-be boots. This was a little shameless even by my standards~ She couldn’t possibly turn mad over a game, would she?

As I discreetly lifted my head up to look at Yuki, she was also staring back at me with a smile.

I had no clue what sort of a smile that was, but it subtly exuded a feeling of slyness. At the current stage 30, Yuki manipulated the levers to open a secret pathway that directly led to stage 50.

“I haven’t given up yet, alright?”

“Challenging stage 50 without any items would be difficult to say the least.”

“Just you watch.”



Watching Yuki intensely focus on the screen with her lips shut tight was an incredibly cute sight.

I was not the only one thinking this; the surrounding gamers took secretive glances at the scene of Yuki working the levers, and there were even some who stayed behind us to watch.

“Woah~ That guy is playing the game like a complete asshole.”

“Yeah, he’s snatching every single item. What a fucking bastard. Go easy dude, go easy...”

“If I had a chance to play with a girl like that, I would give her all the items...”

No matter if I died from over-consumption and what not~ I was winning fair and square~!!

But... What should I ask Yuki to do after I win? There isn’t much that I could ask of her. If one had to pressure me to the end, I would take her to ‘that’ place that I thought...

Hey, hey~ What am I thinking of, this is only our 2nd date...

While I was lost in thought, something spectacular occurred.

“It’s a cross!!”

At the shout of the man from behind us, Yuki was startled and looked at the screen to see a blue cross fall four blocks from her position.

“Wow, it’s real. I’ve never seen a cross drop in Bubble Boggle before~!!”

Fuck!! No~!! I quickly stepped on the bubbles to head towards the cross drop. I have to eat that no matter what!!!!

“Miss, you can do it! Quickly, jump!!”

If someone else saw this scene, they would think that I was some sort of a devil!! I bit down on my lips and spun the lever to run towards the cross, but Yuki was able to eat it before me by a hair’s breadth. Subsequently, the men who were watching Yuki rose up in a clamor.

“Wow~!!”

The cross being one of the ultimate master piece items in Bubble Boggle with the rarity of a 1:4782 chance of appearing, it was able to turn the attacks of the dinosaur from bubble breaths into fire breaths.

The flames were a powerful weapon that was able to instantly K.O. enemies in one hit. She had a huge advantage over me, who had to first trap the enemies in a bubble.

In the end, with the onslaught of the flames from the cross, Yuki was able to quickly catch up to my score. Until the very end, she did not die even once and cleared the game.

The final score was 92,000 to 89,000. Of course, I was the latter.

“I won~”

She was clapping her hands with a smile on her face as the credits were rolling.

My back was aching so much from playing for over an hour. I’ll just quickly do whatever she wants and go back to my hotel to sleep.

It was past 10 PM when we finally went out of the game center and headed to the subway. The last train was almost here, so there were some people heading to the station as well.

“Tell me what you want. We promised each other to fulfill a wish.”

Yuki took out a small notepad from her handbag and shyly passed it over to me.

“Can you give me your phone number?”

“This is your wish?”

“Yes...”

This... was a completely different face from when she was possessed by a banshee while playing Bubble Boggle earlier. I took her notepad and wrote down my number.

“I usually get off work at around 5 PM, so you can call me anytime after that.”

“I had a lot of fun today, Mr. Junhyuk.”

“Same here. Before I head back to Kyoto tomorrow, are you free to grab a meal with me?”

“Yes~ I’ll be waiting for your call.”

Once we arrived at the Shibuya station, I glanced at my wristwatch and spoke to Yuki.

“I think I’ll be staying in a hotel near here. Go home safely, Miss Yuki.”

“Okay. But Mr. Junhyuk, there is one thing I’m curious about...”

“What is it?”

“If you had won instead, what wish would you have made? It seemed very important...?”

“Ah... That... Mmm... That’s a secret.”

“So it’s an Ah~ That~ Mmm~ secret. But I think I have the general idea.”

“Hh... Hmm...”

As I averted my gaze, Yuki lightly tilted her lips upward and spoke.

“Then, rest well today and we’ll see each other tomorrow.”

“Yes, go home safely.”

A while later. After Yuki disappeared inside the Shibuya station, I rubbed my red face and muttered.

“Ah~ it’s warm, warm...”

# Chapter 43 : The Oncoming 16-Bit Era (1)

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“Uh~ Luxury hotels are expensive for a reason.”

After waking up from the hotel room, I fixed my disheveled hair and headed to the bathroom. I finally began to wake up from my half-sleep state after brushing my teeth and washing my face with cold water.

There were several bottles of beer rolling around on the hotel table; it seemed as if I had taken a few drinks while watching TV last night. I'd overslept by quite a bit, so I swiftly dressed myself and left the hotel after checking out.

“I can't go on an empty stomach, I should have breakfast before meeting up with Kawaguchi.”

I unfolded the newspaper I brought from the hotel while I ate a modest bowl of soup in a tiny restaurant where I could eat alone without any stress. The only source of information I had of this era was through the news or newspaper, so I went through them every once in awhile, and there was a pretty interesting story today.

-NEGA's first home console, the NEGA Disk, admits defeat to Mintendo. However, they are announcing their newest 16-bit handheld device, the NEGA Drive!!-

‘In the end, they're preempting into the 16-bit field.’

&

After meeting with Kawaguchi in Pentagon's Tokyo office, I headed back to Kyoto with a leisurely mind. However the state of affairs in the Mintendo HQ was in chaos.

"Director Kang, why are you coming back now. President Yamauchi's been looking for you all morning."

The information receptionist at the headquarters lobby wildly clamored as soon as he saw me.

"I mean, my business trip to Tokyo should've been recorded in the attendance list, what's the problem here? Would I be teleported back the moment you look for me?"

"This is not the time to make jokes sir~ Anyways, please hurry to the President's office."

I'm tired as hell from riding the subway for such a long time, and what's happening here... I grumbled in my mind as I headed to Yamauchi's office.

-Knock, knock

As I lightly knocked, President Yamauchi's choleric voice rang out.

“Come in!!”

Oh oops... His temper is reaching the boiling point. I can tell just by hearing his voice. I took a moment to take a big breath in and turned the door handle to head in. In the office was a gathering of Mr. Gunpei, Mr. Shige, as well as other core employees.

“Kang Junhyuk~!! You bastard, why are you coming back now~!!”

“Haven’t you checked the checked the records? I just returned from handing the illustrations and cartridges to several game magazine companies.”

“Hey bastard, you became a director so why are you wandering around Tokyo like that. Sending those items by mail would be good enough~!! The monthly travel expenses that you bastards self request is comparable to the average employee’s salary~!! Why don’t you just rent out a personal spot in the subways?!!”

“How, you didn’t say anything before so why are you being like this now?”

“Have you seen the morning papers?”

“I did. Are you all perhaps gathered here like this because of the NEGA Drive announcement?”

“That’s right you bastard. Our competitor NEGA announced an



innovation, and you're not feeling anything?"

"Why would I? Isn't it better for us?"

"What did you say?"

In response to my nonchalant reply, the expressions of the people in the conference room instantly crinkled. At that moment, Mr. Gunpei who was staring at me sitting next to President Yamauchi spoke.

"You said it'll be better for us?"

"Of course. They're going to be inspecting the market response to the 16-bit device for us, what else can top this?"

"However, you can't ignore them being the innovator, can you? If it goes on like this, the contrast between our current games and NEGA's new games running on the faster machine would widen..."

"Mr. Gunpei, Do you think it's a set rule that the capabilities of a device with upgraded specs will be displayed to it's full potential? There will be no software companies that are able to fully take advantage of the change in hardware from the beginning. They would have to conduct research on the new specs at least and experiment with the extent of how many objects can be added."

"That's true, all that would take a minimum of 1~2 years. For example, there is a clear difference between the graphics of

Shigeru-kun's Super Marigee 1 and Super Marigee 3, even though they're both in the same device..."

"Correct. My 'Psychic Battle' currently in development, would've been impossible to make at the start of the Family's launch. But we're making these games which are nearing release. Following this logic, even if the NEGA Drive is released, there won't be many differences from the current games."

Ensuingly, the heads of the people in the conference room automatically started to nod.

"NEGA has already announced their plans for the 16-bit device. That means it would be released a year later at the quickest. I think this would have the converse effect of squeezing NEGA instead."

Mr. Shige tilted his head and asked.

"Why would...?"

"Your Super Marigee 3 is nearing completion, is that correct?"

"Yup, that's right..."

"Then how would you feel if our Mintendo announced we would be coming out with a new console 1 year from now? Even if you release your game now, it would become buried under the new console in one year? After finalizing the cartridge production, there would only be 10 months left for the game. Would the

customers anticipating the release of the new console be willing to buy Super Marigee 3?”

“In the perspective of the developer, there wouldn’t be a worser backstab than that. I’d rather tweak the current game to fit the new console.”

“What about the basic production costs? The current monthly sales for our Family is 300,000 in Japan only. But will these people buy 300,000 units of the new device as soon as it comes out? No way. It’ll be good if it sells 10,000 units in the first month. On top of that, will the 10,000 buyers of the new console necessarily buy Super Marigee 3? Of course, the game has a name value attached so it would sell well; however, you can expect about half of the total device sales to turn into the title sale. The sales of Super Marigee as a whole would be reduced to about half here as well, correct?”

“Fuck... So selling it through either the old device or the new device is...”

“God damn right. The 3rd party game developers for NEGA will be feeling this exact sentiment. I’ll throw out a problem right now. What will be the course of action for these third parties?

Number 1: Fuck it~ We’ll just release it.

Number 2: We’ll release it after 1 year. But for this option, it wouldn’t be possible unless one was a major software company, right?

That leaves option number 3: We will find the closest substitute platform to NEGA’s Disk and publish our titles there. Now~ What option do you think they will choose?”

“Then... could that...!”

“Just in time, the capabilities of our Family console has been upgraded thanks to the specialty chip made from Raitex. Comparing the base models alone, our current Family would fall behind the NEGA Disk but once we add the specialty chip, there would be no issues with coding it to match the specs of the NEGA Disk. This is the time where we would have to open doors for the incoming third party developers.”

“You mean to lower the royalty rates even more?”

“If we lowered our royalty rates even when we required funds to purchase the specialty chip from Raitex, we would be able to gain the preference of the second party developers of NEGA.

If our enemy came out with a strong move, we would counter with the strongest.”

This is the end of my speech. If you guys have anything else to say, go ahead?

But they were all unable to speak as if a spoon was stuck in their mouths. In their minds, NEGA announcing their newest device was turning from the absolute worst situation to a great chance for observation.

President Yamauchi seemed to be trying to scrutinize my logic, but it was to avail as he let a long sigh out.

“This man here, truly can’t be won over with words. I have nothing to say to his speech that he seemed to have prepared beforehand.”

“NEGA did announce their new device this morning, but we weren’t caught completely unaware either. Wasn’t this why I asked for the creation of the New Console Development Department?”

“Right, how is the development for the next gen Family going?”

“The final blueprint for the control pad is finished and starting production.”

“By control pad, you mean the game controllers? You made the control pad first instead of the actual device?”

“The controller is more important than the device specs. It should be the sturdiest part of the gaming device, made with absolute attention. You all will love it. That aside, since NEGA made a splash today, we should also follow up with a drop of our own tomorrow at the newspaper.”

“For...?”

“Let’s pull the release date of Mr. Gunpei’s Gamboy closer. Our focus should not be on the 16-bit console market but the handheld devices.”

At that moment, Gunpei looked at President Yamauchi's reaction with a worried gaze.

"Ah... But we haven't decided on the market price for our Gamboy yet..."

"What are the estimates?"

"The expenditures to Sharp, our display maker, is huge so we set the tentative price at 14,800 yen. However, we don't know if the customers would understand this price..."

"Then pull the release date forward by 1 week and set the price to 12,800 yen. We will start selling it at 14,800 yen starting January 1st of next year. What do you think about this release sale strategy?"

"So we would lose profits in the initial week?"

"When have we made money by selling the Family? Our primary revenue came from the cartridges. As long as the Gamboy itself is popular, we can bring in the cash with cartridge sales."

"President, Kang-kun's proposal isn't bad at all. What should we do?"

"What should we do? Immediately call the daily papers!!"

The instant President Yamauchi laid down his word, the people gathered at the office rose up in a flurry and hustled. Indeed, the marketing department who was calmly waiting for the Gamboy release date should be restless..

Eventually, President Yamauchi and I were the only ones left in the office. Now that I've taken care of the general problem, I should head back too.

“Then I'll be leaving...”

At that moment, President Yamauchi, who was immersed in deep thought with his arms crossed, open his mouth.

“Kang-kun, please stay for a moment.”

## Chapter 44 : The Oncoming 16-bit Era (2)

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“Kang-kun, take a seat here.”

“What? Oh.”

As I stared at President Yamauchi who spoke with a heavier voice than usual, he gestured me to sit with a slight upwards tilt on his lips. What’s this? Is there an impending crisis...?

Did he somehow find out about my involvement with Raitex? Or is my identity as the developer of Dragon Emblem somehow exposed?

No, there’s no way... What’s happening here?

“Kang Junhyuk-kun.”

“Yes, President.”

“How long have we worked together?”

“It’s been about four years.”

“Since the end of this year is approaching, it’ll be almost five years.”



“That’s how it is then, time is flying by fast. Haha...”

“Yeah. During these five years, we’ve undergone an 180 degree turn from a toy company to a game industry powerhouse; we’re also having significant success on the American market. Under my command, Mintendo had surpassed its original limits from when my great-grandfather founded the company.”

Why is he bragging about himself out of the blue? President Yamauchi continued talking after taking a sip from the cup of coffee on top of the table.

“And the contributions from Gunpei and Shige, and of course you, Kang-kun, have been the greatest out of all. That’s why...”

“Yes, President.”

“I have a concern that’s been hovering in my mind recently.”

“A concern?”

A concern from the CEO of the biggest conglomerate in the game industry? What could it be? But for a problem he’s having, it would be better to discuss with either Mr. Gunpei or Mr. Shige, why did he select me?

After contemplating for a long time, President Yamauchi took out a photo from his jacket.

On top of the table laid a picture of a girl that could never be described as beautiful-even with empty words-smiling back at me.

“She’s my niece. What do you think?”

“Ah, that... she’s beau...tiful.”

This is the first time I’ve felt morally disturbed by something I said.

“Is she to your liking?”

Like, my asshole.

“Yes? Haha, that’s... But why are you showing your niece to me...?”

“This girl has been ready for marriage, but she hasn’t been able to find a mate yet.”

She won’t be.

With her level of attractiveness, her soulmate would be waiting for her in her next life. But I can’t say that aloud, could I!? I was in the most precarious situation since the time slip from 1983. President Yamauchi was standing here as a coercer no matter how people saw it! What should I do!?

President Yamauchi stared at the photo with a baffled expression before opening his mouth.

“Why have men left her alone for so long when she’s this beautiful? There’s obviously a problem with the eyesight of today’s youths.”

Why don’t you get your eyes checked at the hospital instead? Are you joking right now?

“So I wanted to introduce her to someone suitable from our company. Gunpei is already married, and Shige is too old for me to introduce to Sumire. What I’m going with this is...”

Before Yamauchi could finish his sentence, I cut him off.

“Excuse me, but the age of your niece is...?”

“She’s 24 this year. A blooming flower indeed.”

Flower my ass... A weed growing from the remote corners of Siberia’s barren mountains would be prettier than this flower. An age of 24 in Japan would translate to 26 in Korea. The cultural consensus in the 80s tended to favor earlier marriage, so she was in the suitable age range. But why am I being introduced as her potential partner!!

“You’ll be turning 25 this year, Kang-kun? This truly is~ You would be able to connect easily with Sumire being in the same age range.”

“Her name is Sumire(The Camelia flower)?”

Immediately apologize to the Camelia flower, Yamauchi...

“Yeah, her name is beautiful too, right? She’s the daughter of my younger sibling. We can set up a blind date if you’d like, what do you think?”

“I...”

“Yeah, go ahead...”

“I’m... “

President Yamauchi was smiling from ear to ear with a highly expectant expression on his face. Work your brain, Kang Junhyuk!! I have to escape this calamity!! How, How!? I’d rather hole inside a basement making games and die than meet this person.

Think, Kang Junhyuk!! Come up with one of your ideas that you’ve shocked everyone with to escape... her!!

“I’m a celibatarian.”

“What...?”

This is crazy... what the hell is coming out of my mouth?

At that instant, President Yamauchi rapidly scooted his chair as far away from me as possible.

“Celibacy? You’re saying you have no interest in women?”

“That’s right.”

“Huh~ After working yourself day and night, you can’t see a beautiful woman when she’s directly in front of your eyes. You can only be called a real man by marrying women and leading the household.”

I’ve also heard those words when I was in the military. When will I become this so-called true man~?

“Your celibacy aside, I guarantee that you will change your views after meeting her in person.”

No, sir. Meeting her would only confirm it. But President Yamauchi didn’t seem to take my perspective into consideration at all.

“No matter, I’m planning on inviting her to the house party early

next year. I will properly introduce you to her then.”

“Please, there’s no need. Mr. President, I don’t have any thoughts on dating...”

“Kang-kun, you think I’m only introducing you to her for you to try dating?”

“...?”

“If you want to expand your career further in Japan, don’t you know it would be difficult with your status as a Korean citizen? I want to take you in as a family. A member of the Yamauchi clan that is.”

“But I’m...”

“Anyways, I’ve laid down my thoughts to you, so you’re free to head back now. Think well about my intentions in your dormitory.”

I smiled bitterly and left the office after greeting President Yamauchi.

The sun was already setting in the mountains as I looked out the window. Should I have said I was dating Yuki instead? But we weren’t formally together yet, so I couldn’t bear to put that lie in my mouth.

I was also like this in 2015, and I was rather inexperienced with women then as well.

Anyways, I must schedule a business trip during the house party next year.

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The next day, Mintendo underwent a state of emergency along with the release of our mobile Gamboy.

Resulting from our 2000 Yen discount on the device, everywhere from small shops to large department stores were incessantly ordering from Mintendo. Thanks to that, we achieved a massive success by filling up the pre-orders for the first 300,000 units.

As Mintendo, the king of home entertainment consoles announced their brand new handheld device, NEGA's Drive was erased from everyone's memory within a day.

It was a given that there would be more interest in a device being released in a month, rather than one year later.

At that moment, my office door opened, and Mr. Gunpei entered the room to see me.

“Kang-kun, I've ordered the additional connectors for two players like you requested, but would this port really be useful? I think it's enough for handheld devices to be for only one player?”

There was an additional port that was able to connect to other devices added on to the completed Gamboy. Everyone had opposed the idea to preserve our independent ecosystem, but the finished product had the additional port added in as a result of my relentless proposals.

I smiled in response to Mr. Gunpei's question as I replied.

“We need it. Absolutely.”

“Phew~ We've sided with you because you were insistent on adding the port, but would it really be alright?”

“You just wait and see. That port will transform your Gamboy into a monster of a machine, Mr. Gunpei.”

Kyun Hyunjin had analyzed that most parents wouldn't buy their children more than one expensive devices and predicted the handheld Gamboy to sell for only around 100,000 units at best. But with the addition of a particular RPG title, the Gamboy sold an astronomic 118.67 million across the world.

What was that RPG? Do you remember that story about the sticker on the bread and that people would throw away the bread just for the sticker?

If you still can't remember, just you wait. I will definitely make you remember...



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December 20th, 1987, five days before Christmas. Akihabara District, Tokyo.

On top of the piles of record-high snow piles were a row of endless trash bags. Why were these trash bags lined up in a row like this? Sorry, let me explain.

“Excuse me.”

“Yes...?”

“I’m an employee from Mintendo. Here, have some hot coffee.”

I handed the coffee with strands of steam emanating from the mug to him. The young man with his face buried in his puffy, duck-feathered jacket nodded his head in thanks and stuck his hand out.

“Th...Thank.. Thanka you...”

Thanka you? It looked like he could barely speak in this freezing cold. I can’t understand why they’re out here suffering like this. I let out a long sigh and watched the intense snowfall piling the streets. Around me were my co-workers who were handing out hot coffee to customers,

Oh, how online shopping trumps everything~ With a few clicks

inside your cozy home, the package would be delivered right at your doorsteps.

Of course, popular items sold out within mere seconds and left you with a sense of disappointment, but at least one didn't have to freeze half to death in this cold, right?

“I..I would like a cup of coffee.”

As a plethora of outstretched arms stretched out at me like the zombie apocalypse, the coffee inside my mug was rapidly depleted. I ran over to the supply van that was stocked with coffee to refill, but the coffee prepared beforehand had already run out.

“Eugh~ Director Kang, It's too cold here...”

How warm could a van heater in the 80s be... I threw a hand warmer to the female employee covered in a parker who was shivering with frost.

“You can use that for now, don't get frostbite...”

“Thank you, Director.”

“This snowstorm was not forecasted, so our preparations were too lacking...”

“But look at that, the line is stretching out all the way to the front

of the subway station. Like you said, the limited discount marketing was a huge success.”

“Hell, they’re about to spend more money on cold medicine by trying to save 2000 yen. I’m making everyone suffer for nothing. I apologize, Miss Mina.”

“N, No~!! I’m fine. I volunteered to come after all...”

At that moment, I heard the voice of Mr. Gunpei calling me.

“Kang-kun~!! Is there any coffee left?”

I crossed my arms in an X and shouted.

“It’s all gone!! That was the last bit!!!”

The coordinator for this event, Mr. Gunpei, trotted over with the empty coffee mugs. Not to mention his clothes, his eyebrows were also stacked with snow, but his face was brilliant.

## Chapter 45 : The Oncoming 16-bit Era (3)

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“Judging from the atmosphere of the last conference, the idea of an expensive device didn’t bode well. However, everything seems to be going well for now. Once the initial batch sells out from the 10 day promotional discount, we should be able to see the network effect through kids.”

“Some students will bring the device to school, if one kid from every class bought one, it would be advertised to 50 others.”

“Exactly, that’s one marketing benefit of a mobile device. Just like the Game & Watch, people would see our device on the subways as well, free advertisement here lads,”

I can relate. In elementary school, my classmate brought one in and showed it off. When asked to play on the device, he’d be haughty to an intolerable level. In the end, his device was stolen within 3 days causing a huge ruckus...

“Excuse me, is there any more coffee left? Our customers waiting in line are asking for it...”

A worker distributing the coffee came back with an empty mug and asked.

“Oh, there’s still ten more hours to go until the event starts. What are we going to do in this freezing cold?”

“We can’t just ask them to go back either. Our only option is to try and prepare for any disaster that might pop up.”

Ensuingly, one marketing employee spoke while blowing steam unto his frozen hands.

“Should we buy hot packs from the convenience store and pass those around?”

“Hot packs?” That’s not a bad idea, but to supply a crowd this large we would need to make trips to several stores.”

“We don’t have any other choice. News reporters should be swarming in soon; should our customers just catch frostbite?”

“You’re right, we should do everything in our power to help these freezing souls.”

In the end, we scoured the nearby stores for products that could warm the body and loaded the items to our van and distributed them to the people in line. Even after that, the freezing chill showed no signs of withdrawing.

“Keugh... You all are incredible. I would’ve given up and gone home by now.”

Mr. Gunpei rubbed his reddened nose and stepped into the van. Subsequently, Miss Mina who was trembling in the corner spoke to Mr. Gunpei with a wavering voice.

“Director Gunpei, couldn’t we request the event to open sooner?”

“I’m sorry, but the event grounds are too narrow to bring anymore people in rightnow. We can’t leave someone outside...”

“So that’s why we’re standing here being frozen to death.”

In response to my last comment, Gunpei heartily laughed and patted my shoulders.

“But I feel reassured with you here, Kang-kun. This will be one hell of an experience to remember. Brace up guys, we can do this.”

Aside from Gunpei and I, there were five others who were assigned to the Tokyo opening event today. We were barely able to stave off the cold inside the van, but how cold were the people outside?

I was not able to get a proper night’s sleep with the scream of the howling winds that seeped in through the slight openings of the ban.

“Uhh... it’s cold as dog shit.”

“What?? Did you say anything Director Kang?”

“It’s nothing. It was a Korean phrase to express the freezing

temperature.”

I wanted to move my body a little as my entire body was shivering from doing nothing. As the van door opened, a sword-like gale that was wreaking havoc outside assaulted the interior.

“D..Director, the door!!”

“Alright, I’ll quickly close it.”

Slam~!!

I felt as if I’d shrunk by at least 5 cm after crouching into a ball all night. I spun my arm in a circle and stretched my muscles as I yawned.

“The snow stopped, thankfully.”

Crrushh. My ankles sunk into the snow piled road that showed no sign of human footsteps. The snowstorm last night was fierce, what happened to everyone standing in line? As I turned my head around...

“Gasp!!”

Stretching from the event grounds to the subway station were a neat line of snow piles. I saw a few people massaging one another to relax the muscles just like me. It’s a relief everyone survived in

the sub zero temperature...

“Wow, this really...”

Realistically, ordinary people would've paid the extra 2000 Yen and bought the device at a later date, but the motley bunch gathered here weren't concerned about saving the measly 2000 Yen.

They were human; they wouldn't risk harming their bodies for that reason to buy the Gamboy. But their yearning to be the first to experience this new device enabled them to withstand the extreme chill.

Perhaps to them, the agony of waiting for the second batch after the initial had run out was greater than the pain of the bone-freezing cold.

These people would later be coined the title “Otakus” following the release of a particular animation about a boy who was apprehended by his father for vehemently resisting riding on a purple robot.

&

The mobile gamboy was a product that would've originally been released on the April of 1989.

At that time, Mintendo was planning on releasing it on the



summer of 1988, but the date was delayed due to internal conflicts.

But today's date was December 21st, 1987.

The first mobile gaming devices using the cartridge were placed onto the shelves.

“WoW~!!!!”

Following the release of Karin's Legend, and Dragon Warrior 2, opening days for new titles weren't a rare occurrence anymore. But with the unique point of being a mobile device, gathering a large crowd was successful. Even with the expensive price tag, the device had begun selling like hot cakes along with its release.

The co-launching title, Super Marigee Rand, also became an item that people would buy nine times out of ten when buying the device, a successful business move.

The quality of the Super Marigee alone was enough to make a person who came to the event for curiosity, stand in line...

From the four co-launching titles, a baseball game was the second popular title next to Super Marigee. We thought we had prepared enough but almost one fifth of the initial stock was sold out by midday, which caused Mr. Gunpei to skip his meal and tirelessly run around the store.

“Take it easy, you're not at the height of your youth anymore...”

“I’m still filled with energy after running around?”

“Really?”

Mr. Gunpei took the canned drink I handed him and placed his hands on the lid. But he was unable to open the can due to his trembling fingers.

Tick... Tick... He wouldn’t be able to exert strength into his fingertips by running around all day without having eaten anything...

I opened the drink for Mr. Gunpei and handed it to him. In response, Mr. Gunpei looked at me with a worried expression and spoke.

“President Yamauchi told me that you were a celibate, is that true?”

“Puhp~!! Ah~ This...”

After spraying roughly half the juice in my mouth, I wiped my mouth with a tissue before opening my mouth.

“It’s not like that at all. President Yamauchi was trying to set me up on a blind date with his niece; In haste, I misspoke while barely being able to hold myself back fainting.”

“The president’s niece? Is she perhaps Miss Sumire??”

“Oh? You know her too?”

“Of course I do, I’ve met her a few times in person as well...”

“So that was the case... I only saw her picture... But... She’s...”

“She’s miles away from beauty, isn’t she?”

I wasn’t even hoping for a beauty; I wouldn’t have come out like this if she was ordinary looking...

“Based on President Yamauchi’s tone, it seemed like he would’ve tried to arrange a marriage at any cost, so I had no choice but to...”

“Haha. Knowing our president, he would’ve tried to set up a meeting even if you were dating someone already. That’s how much affection he has for his niece... But the thing is...”

“There’s something else...?”

“As President Yamauchi had been catering to her wants and needs ever since she was a child, Miss Sumire does not have the words “giving up” in her vocabulary.”

After hearing Mr. Gunpei's explanation, I felt a stream of chill run down my back.

"If you were going to lie, why didn't you say something more believable? In my opinion, being a celibate is a weak argument... What are you going to do at the company new year's party for bachelors?"

"Heh, I've already scheduled a business trip to America around that time."

"Haha, nice! As expected of Kang-kun! There's an old saying that goes like this: One will get easily tired of a beauty after living together for 5 years..."

"Are you criticizing me for only caring about a person's outer appearance?"

"No."

"Then?"

"If you're together with an ugly girl, you won't even last 5 years. Just don't start the relationship."

... A wise saying indeed ...

&

After Mr. Gunpei returned to the opening event from our brief break, we saw that the line was still endless.

Even for the model device that was put out for experimental use was swarmed with a group of people who were all too eager to touch it.

“Director, Please save me~”

Miss Mina, who was shivering inside the van at dawn, was sucked of her life force by the customers now.

“I’ll take your place; come back after some rest.”

“Thank you very much.”

Of course, her legs would be tired after walking around in high heels all day. After taking over for Mina, I looked around the event plaza.

One student who was holding the model Gamboy muttered with a surprised expression.

“It’s really light...”

Mmm... It shouldn’t be that light? Pragmatically speaking, the design was no different from a brick, and the official weight of the

device was recorded as 220 grams barring the weight of the batteries. If the 4 batteries were added, it's weight would approach almost 300 grams.

But compared SenSony's latest device the Walkman, the mobile Gamboy could be considered compact. It looked silly in my eyes but to them, it was the newest innovation.

I steadily moved my footsteps towards to the 'Psychic Battle' plaza. As soon as Mr. Kashiwaba, who handed out coffee with me until dawn, spotted me, he came running over.

"The Gamboy is a huge hit, but the number of customers that came here to experience 'Psychic Battle' can't be ignored either!"

"Of course it should do well. I've been told off by President Yamauchi for wasting needless amounts of money on advertising the game..."

The launching of the mobile Gamboy was important, but the main reason I personally came to the event plaza was precisely for this reason.

And on this day, the demo cartridges for 'Psychic Battle' were exploding in popularity. Why? It was because of this text:

-Challenge the newest title, Psychic Battle!!-

The first player to clear the first stage will win a life-size poster of

a character.

The first player to clear the second stage will be presented with the demo Psychic Battle cartridge.

The prizes were simple, but its effect was tremendous.

From producing an article with each of the four major game magazines last month, the anticipation for the game was at an all time high; Early beta testers had left great reviews on the articles.

Thanks to that, my game had surpassed Super Marigee 3 in the most anticipated title rankings...

However, I was not satisfied with that and took one step forward.

## Chapter 46 :

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On an article from FamiTong Magazine this month was the date & location for the first public experimental game trials for Psychic Battle.

Mr. Gunpei gave an eager yes to my proposal for the event in anticipation for the audience it would attract.

Due to that, the gathering of people in the event plaza were extremely polarized with one group gathered on one side at Mr. Gunpei's Gamboy... While my Psychic Battle was attracting the second group.

A magnificent scene was unfolding on the Psychic Battle game screen such that passersby would stop in their tracks and fixedly stare at the screen.

“Ah~!! You missed your chance!!”

As the player lowered his head after being KO'd by the first stage boss who barely had any health left, another challenger swept into take his place.

“So there isn't anyone that was able to receive the experimental cartridge as the prize yet?”

“A few were able to clear the first boss, but the exponentially rising difficulty from thereon out had... However, the line is ever



increasing as if more and more players became stimulated.”

“As long as these players develop a sense for the game by watching, a few winners should appear. Today is the first day of the event after all; It wouldn’t be fun if clearing the second stage were that easy.”

“Right? The situation has become a bit chaotic as some people are trying over and over again to collect each of the four illustrations from the game magazine covers.”

“If it becomes too excessive, make sure to step in and manage the situation, Mr. Kashiwaba. We prepared this event so that plenty of people would be able to experience it.”

“Yes.”

‘I’m interested to see just how many experimental cartridges will be given away in this event...’

I swallowed a chuckle and looked at my surroundings.

&

The initial stock for the mobile Gamboy units were completely exhausted by day four following the successful launch. This

outcome was six days earlier than we predicted.

Since it was christmas season, many devices must've been purchased for children; The funny thing was the 300,000 sales we've made during these past four days eclipsed the combined sales of Mintendo's Family and the NEGA Disk.

Word had it, the executives who predicted that the Gamboy would be too expensive to be considered as a children's toy couldn't hide their astonishment.

Factories immediately went into manufacturing the devices again, but it seemed the supply wouldn't be able to meet the demand for now.

One company that had benefited tremendously from the popularity of the mobile Gamboy was Sharp, who exported the black and white frames to Mintendo. As they were the sole manufacturers of the Gamboy frames, their massive economic weight could instantly revive the currently waning economy.

The CEO of Sharp, Mr. Machida and our very own President Yamauchi had a great business relationship; hence they were able to work out a win-win solution to supplying the frames.

The mobile Gamboy incorporated the reflective black-and-white STN screen to match its massive power consumption; Even then, the maximum (continuous) play time was only around five hours with four AA batteries.

On top of that, the STN screen was a reflective surface for light; One would not be able to see the screen at all due to the reflected rays of the sun. There weren't any backlights either making it impossible to play the device at night with the lights turned off.

However, the merit of being able to play a game without a TV overshadowed all these disadvantages. Device sales were on fire.

As the 8 bit console market was drawing to a close, our mobile Gamboy became the new heir of the console industry.

“Hey!! Let me try it once~ Yeah?”

“No~ If you're desperate, you can beg your mom to buy it for you like I did~”

“Petty bastard.”

I was walking on the road to the subway station to a personal meeting when I saw two arguing twerps who were coming home from school arguing.

Looking at the clothes of the chubby twerp, he seemed to be from a relatively well-off family. If you're friend wants to play a round, you should let him do so. How greedy.

It's exactly like a scene of the chubby boy and the skinny boy from Doraemon. I let out a smirk and passed the arguing pair.

Today was Christmas eve, the day when the promotion event for Gamboy had come to a close. Mr. Gunpei, along with all the other employees, had dashed back to Kyoto as soon as the event was over, but I still remained in Tokyo.

Why? I still had business here.

I hurriedly boarded the subway and headed to the Raitex factory situated on the outskirts of Tokyo. I was on my way to meet the indian native on the night that was said to be the most romantic night of the year.

“Chandra!!”

“Oh~!! It’s Kang Junhyuk.”

Chandra and his buddies were having dinner when they immediately began waving and smiling as soon as they saw me.

“You guys are looking much healthier nowadays~!!”

“This is all thanks to Kang Junhyuk. Money I send to Pumala’s home is huge. Pumala can marry now.” (TL Note: Pumala is referring to himself in 3rd person here, remember, these indians aren’t the best at speaking Japanese!)

Pumala flashed a grinned with a spoon in his mouth. As a result,

his friends started teasing him in their mother tongue. Pumala definitely had a silly personality from what I could tell.

“But Kang Junhyuk, what’s the occurrence? Weren’t we supposed to operate in secret? Even though all the other employees went home for today.”

“It’s not exactly a secret operation. I can just say I came here to check up on the specialty chip. More importantly, were you able to find what I requested?”

“Of course!”

“Then I’m sorry to disturb you in the middle of your meal, but can I see you outside for a second?”

“I already ate. There’s no problem.”

A moment later.

Chandra led me to the research lab inside the Raitex factory. This lab contained state-of-the-art equipment and plenty of room, leagues better than his previous cramped workshop in Akiba. And in this place, I finally met the CPU chip that would be used for the new generation Super Family console.

“So this is the new Riko 5A22 16-bit CPU that will be used in the Super Family...”

“This CPU was modified to fit our needs from Apple II’s high performance GS WDC65816 CPU. It’s a 2 year old model, but there is nothing else that can beat its performance for the price.”

“I agree with that, but wouldn’t the graphic rendering speed be too slow?”

“There’s no way around that. It was originally designed to quickly run tasks. By using the 16-bit chip, the overall quality would rise, but there will be restrictions on the speed.”

To the gamers who’ve had similar childhood experiences as me comparing the Super Family and NEGA’s Drive, there should have been some differences. Why were there no games like NEGA’s headlining game ‘Sonic’, that enabled the player experience an exhilarating graphic speed, in Super Family consoles?

It was clearly a console that came out later than the NEGA Drive, and the price was more expensive; This lead to some feelings of frustration.

As my neighborhood friend had NEGA’s ‘Sonic’ which induced a different kind of entertainment from Super Marigee, we sometimes traded our consoles and played on them.

‘Now I know the reason why the Super Family was slower than the NEGA Drive.’

Mintendo couldn't stand being at the 2nd place.

They would strain themselves to do everything they could to surpass the highest performing device with a new innovation and take control of the market for the next 5~6 years using that very device.

If that wasn't the case, they would have to put out a new console every 1~2 years in order to stay on top of the ever-changing Game industry. Factoring in the development and marketing costs, each console would have to last at least five years.

Sales of these expensive new devices would incur losses for the firm early on. Of course, as the market price settled down, profits would start to roll in.

The raw production cost for one unit totaled to 17,000 Yens, but to match the economic situation of the customers, the sales price was lowered to 14,800 Yen. Each sale would result in a net loss of 2,200 Yen for the firm, which they would try to make up with Game Cartridge sales.

However, Mintendo was different.

They would do everything they can do lower the production costs of the hardware by using cheaper parts. This "hole" would be sewn by the quality of games.

The very CPU in front of my eyes was a result of this logic.

‘I’ve been receiving frequent proposals for various chips so I asked Chandra to search for an appropriate chip; but it’s trash after all. The NEGA Drive had better capabilities around this time period as well...’

At that time, Chandra spoke to me.

“But some deficiencies can be covered to some extent by a skilled programmer.”

“That’s true, but it’s not possible to overcome the limitations of hardware.”

“The limitations of hardware... Keke, great timing. I have something I must show to Kang Junhyuk.”

“Something you must show me? What’s that?”

“You will find out if you follow me.”

Wearing a meaningful smile on his face, Chandra led me to the employee’s recreation room this time. It might seem obvious, but the recreation area at Raitex contained Nintendo’s Family console.

“Everyone is enjoying Kang Junhyuk’s Psychic Battle. The provocative scenes are too..., but the plot is very entertaining.”



“I’m glad to hear that you guys like it. But what’s the thing you wanted to show me?”

“Psychic Battle. It had some points that could be improved., so I modified it a little.”

“What...? You know how to program?”

In response, Pumala had caught up to us and answered with a bright grin.

“There’s nothing Chandra can’t do. He’s a genius.”

Chandra looked happy at Pumala’s compliment as he inserted a blank cartridge with no labels into the Family console. A brief moment later, Psychic Battle’s logo popped up on the screen, and the character selection screen appeared.

‘Mmm... I don’t see any difference up until this point, did he make changes to the game content?’

Chandra tactfully looked at my reaction and slanted the corners of his mouth upwards before selecting the main character Azesha Ren. And with the first stage of the game that soon followed...

“What is this!?”

I involuntarily muttered as soon as I saw the screen.

‘The game became much faster.’

The Psychic Battle that Chandra was playing was approximately 1.5 times faster than what I’d originally made. Additionally, the projectiles that were targeting the character also became faster than normal, and a lot smoother.

“This is? How did you do this?”

In response, Chandra lightly snorted and stood a little taller.

“The original code was clean and organized, but it was needlessly complicated, so Chandra reorganized the code his way. That’s why the load on the CPU noticeably decreased. The original Psychic Battle was great, but I felt the joy of being able to fly around was lacking so I increased the background scrolling by 1.5 times. What do you think? Do you like it?”

The arrangement was too complicated? Psychic Battle was developed by the top coders in Mintendo, Hiyashi and me. But this Chandra, he managed to upgrade it by another level. He’s more incredible than I thought!!

## Chapter 47 :

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It felt as if the 2% that had been lacking had completely been filled. After watching Chandra play the game for a while with my arms crossed, I opened my mouth.

“Chandra.”

“Mn? What??”

“I’ve underestimated you.”

“Right? I did great, didn’t I?? It’s my christmas gift to Kang Junhyuk. Do you like it?”

“Yes, I love it. That’s why...”

“Mn...?”

“You’re going to have another job on your hands.”

“Another? What’s that?”

“I’ll tell you later. First, it’s possible to make a copy of the Riko 5A22 chip you’ve shown me earlier, right?”

“Of course it’s possible.”

“Do anything you can to improve the capabilities, if only by a little. The CPU provider for the new Family console must be us, Raitex, and not Riko.”

“Okay. Pumala, did you understand what Junhyuk said?”

“Pumala understands a 100%.”

Great. The utility of the Indian Natives had increased.

&

“What... is this!? Director!! How could...”

Hiyashi was in the middle of analyzing the Psychic Battle source code that I’d given to him when he suddenly exclaimed. I could completely his current thought process, as I had also been taken aback after seeing that code for the first time.

“Even though I’m looking right at it, I still can’t believe it. To think someone could come up with a formulation like this...”

Coding, a way to communicate with computers, could absolutely be described as an enigmatic language. For example, let’s suppose a passerby asked me for directions on the road. I happened to know the area so I would explain like this: Do you see that super market? There will be a cross walk passed the market. You should see a dry

cleaning place after you cross it and walk for a while. Turn right and you should see your destination.

But Chandra explained it like this: Walk straight for 2 blocks and turn right.

It was the same direction, but the delivery was much shorter. And computers liked to hear the short and exact version.

That allowed the CPU to focus its resources on other tasks. Chandra had allocated these extra resources to background scrolling, with the result turning Psychic Battle into a more perfect game.

‘With this, I can absolutely compete with Super Marigee 3.’

&

January 1st, 1988.

I was finally able to return home for the new year's holiday and observe the current direction of the video game industry. It has been 5 years since the release of the first Family console. The device was approaching the end of its life span.

Every new title release was able to meet a certain quality standard, and as new types of genres like RPGs emerged which conflicted with the simple games in arcades, playing the said arcade games started to become silly compared to all the complex

new games being released.

With Dragon Emblem being the first ever game to excite a player's sense of adventure, subsequent titles from Capco like 'Rockman' and 'Otherworldly Magician', which utilized the swing scroll, boasted an insane level of difficulty.

Especially the 'Otherworldly Magician', with its spooky Background music and the endless wave of zombies, denied many players from even passing the first stage.

"Otherworldly Magician, that game was disgustingly hard as well..."

As for Rockman, beating the stages weren't a big deal after learning the attack patterns of each boss, but Otherworldly Magician was definitely one of those games where you wanted to smash the console after playing it a few times.

"Anyways, my hands are already tied with Super Marigee 3 already. What am I going to do with the impending Dragon Warriors 3 release?"

As the number one RPG of the nation, the comeback of the Dragon Warriors series was already decided. Super Marigee 3 and Dragon Warriors 3, they would be released around Psychic Battle's release; a turbulent storm was approaching the gaming market.

Of course, it would be a festival for gaming enthusiasts. However,

the exact release dates for each of the three heavyweight titles were undecided.

&

Dragon Warrior 3 took the initiative: the release date was set to February 10th, 1988. The release date was projected to be between April ~ May, so a sudden release date of February the 10th was...

-Ring~ Ring~

“Mmm? Who is it...?”

As I picked up the unexpected call, a familiar voice could be heard.

“Mr. Junhyuk~!! It’s me.”

“Yuki?”

Her voice was filled with excitement as if something amazing had happened.

“I made it!”

“What?”

“The Rookie Writer’s contest. The idea you gave to me was selected, Mr. Junhyuk!”

“Ah, really?”

Wow... A food-adventure type concept went through in this era? Haha. All I did was say a few words about a TV program I enjoyed watching back in 2015; seeing the concept get selected now, I’m feeling shocker over any other emotion.

I was regretting not meeting her during the busy Christmas season, but I felt a great sense of gratitude towards her now for calling me as soon as something great happened.

“Then would I be able to watch your program on TV soon, Miss Yuki?”

“Ah, that’s not it. The competition aimed to collect new potential concepts; it’s not automatically going to be turned into a program.”

“So that was the case, that’s too bad.”

“But I’ve earned a title for myself as a rookie writer. The responses from the judges weren’t bad, so I think it would be possible to make it into a reality show with a little more effort.”

“That’s great. I wish you more good things this year, Miss Yuki.”



“Ah, I haven’t wished you a happy new year yet. That... Mmm... (in Korean) Heppy mew yers?”

Heppy mew yers... Yuki had spoken like she was reading the greeting from a textbook. As I bursted out in laughter at her unexpected greeting in Korean, Yuki’s embarrassed voice was heard through the line.

“My pronunciation is terrible, right? Korean is way too hard.”

“Oh, you’re learning Korean now?”

“Yes, but I’m having trouble learning it as there aren’t many places that teach the language. I’m learning from the beginner’s Korean book for now.

“Self-studying Korean should be frustrating for you. Don’t hesitate to ask me anything if you have a question.”

“Yes, I will do that. But Mr. Junhyuk, are you currently at your house right now? You’re not going to visit Korea in the new year?”

“Mmm... I have a lot of work to finish up so...”

“I see... What do you do on the weekends?”

“Ah, I don’t do anything particular on the weekends.”

“Then can I come visit you on a weekend?”

“Ah, sure... there’s no reason you can’t.”

“Then since I owe winning the competition to you, I’ll treat you to a meal when I visit Kyoto.”

“You’ll come to Kyoto?”

“Actually, I wanted to explore Kyoto as well. There are more attractions to see in the Osaka region than Tokyo.”

“That’s true, but...”

“You don’t... want me to visit you?”

“Not at all. It’s actually a relief for me.”

“Relief?”

“Yes. I’m scheduled to go on a business trip to America next week.”

“America? Why? For how long?”

How am I supposed to respond to three questions at once? After contemplating for a while, I gathered my thoughts and opened my mouth.

“I’ll be away for around a month to market the upcoming new title.”

“You’re going to be away for an entire month?”

“But it looks like I’ll be able to see you before i leave, Miss Yuki.”

“Then I’ll be sure to come over this weekend.”

“Alright, call me before you arrive and I’ll be waiting at the station.”

“Okay then~ rest well.”

After ending my call with Yuki, I stared at my passport resting on top of the table. This trip wouldn’t take as long as the first one because all Mr. Gunpei and I were going to do was analyze the market and help with the marketing of Psychic Battle.

‘Ms. Elise and Mr. Wilson... I wonder how they’re doing?’

I briefly smiled at my memories of them. Of course, I would briefly talk on the phone with them, but it has been 3 years since I last saw their faces. I couldn’t say I wasn’t excited to meet them

again. Elise had vastly improved her Japanese language since and could almost communicate as well as a native.

From what Mr. Yamashita said, it seemed like Elise would be transferred to HQ soon; we'll see how that goes.

For this business trip, marketing the game was important, but I was also anticipating my reunion with my old comrades; that's why I had scheduled the trip to a month. Thankfully, Mr. Gunpei expressed that analyzing the market would be better the longer we stay and happily agreed to the 1 month period.

Well, Mr. Gunpei should be aware of what kind of traveller I am now. He shouldn't raise any voices for me staying in a luxury hotel with my own money~

'Chandra is amazing; I need more like him. There are plenty of top talents across America that I could recruit to my side...'

&

"Grunt... America? But you should come to the company New Year's party before you leave. We won't have anything going for us if both you and Gunpei are missing."

"Mr. Shigeru will be there. And the party is for all the HQ employees, there's no particular reason for me to be at the party."

"You bastard, Sumire will be coming to the party too~!!"

‘Actually, that’s half the reason why I’m flying to America.’

I forcefully swallowed these words that rose up to my throat and glanced at Mr. Gunpei who was besides me. Seeing his lips twitch up and down, it looked like Mr. Gunpei was trying his best to stop his laughter in front of President Yamauchi.

“I can’t do anything about it then. I’ll introduce Sumire to you later; work should come first. You said you were leaving next week? Have a safe trip.”

“Yes, then we’ll be back.”

&

“Wow~ So this is the famous Chikurin!!”

Shhhhhh~

The sounds of the swaying winds passing through the bamboo trees naturally drew a smile on my face. Yuki and I were currently standing in front of the Kyoto’s Arashiyama bamboo forest ‘Chikurin’. It seemed as if it was Yuki’s first time here as she was wondrously looking around at the bamboo trees.

“As expected, Kyoto is much more awesome than Tokyo. It would be nice if there was a place like this in Tokyo...”

Yuki spoke with her eyes closed as she inhaled the natural fragrance of bamboo. I was walking next to her, enjoying our weekend date.

“I come here every now and then to cool myself off. I’m glad you like it.”

“Do you come here often, Mr. Junhyuk?”

“This is a great location to be at one with nature. The walkway is nice and the fragrance of the bamboo is...”

“You’re right, hehe. You sounded like an old man when you said ‘This is a great location to be at one with nature’ “

“Cough...”

Well, I was a middle-aged man in the body of a 20-something year old after all. I shrugged off Yuki’s teasing and moved my footsteps.

“Then, you’ll be flying to America on monday?”

“Yes. I’m expecting to be there for around a month.”

“Wow! I haven’t been outside of the country yet, so I’m getting the chills just from hearing you speak.”

Even though you're not the one travelling? Why?

A moment later, Yuki cautiously opened her mouth with a careful expression.

“Mr. Junhyuk, I... I'm curious... about something...”

## Chapter 48 :

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“Yes? What is it?”

“That’s... Mmm, I heard this from my friend, but do you have to take your shoes off when you board the plane?”

... Wow... I couldn’t believe this comedy existed in this period too... I bursted out in laughter after seeing Yuki’s completely serious expression. In response, Yuki mumbled with a bright red face.

“It... It’s a joke~!! Of course you’d have to wear shoes on the plane!!”

At that instant, I immediately stopped laughing and opened my mouth with a serious expression.

“What are you saying, Miss Yuki... Of course you should board a plane without shoes.”

“Ah...!! Right? I, I actually knew that~ Hnngh!!”

Yuki swiftly turned her head and walked away in a brisk manner.

Ah, she’s cute. She’s twenty this year. Considering my real age, the heavens would punish me if... Anyways, she feels like my niece rather than a girlfriend.



Urgh, Yuki is not wrong to call me a grandpa now that I think about it.

Yuki, who was quite a distance away, turned her head and shouted.

“What are you doing, hurry up~!!”

“Haha, I’m going.”

A lone bamboo pathway. And a beautiful girl... Every aspect of this situation were tugging at my heartstrings.

&

After Yuki and I left the Chikurin forest and were feeling quite hungry, we were heading to a restaurant on my car. There were barely any cars on the road in the 80s in Japan, so I was able to drive anywhere without traffic.

I cut through the winter chill with my vehicle as I stepped into the pedal and spurred the engine on.

“Turn left after 300 meters. Please stick to the leftmost lane.”

If this was 30 years in the future, these directions would be coming from a navigation system. But today, it was coming out of

Yuki's mouth to guide me to a tasty restaurant in Kyoto.

“Keke...”

“Why were you laughing to yourself from a while ago? Tell me, so I can laugh with you~ Please?”

“No, it's nothing.”

“Hrrmph, You're being selfish by not telling me...”

How would I explain to you that what you were doing now would be done by a navigation device 30 years from now? I couldn't help but laugh after looking at Yuki's exasperated face.

It may look like she's annoyed right now, but this was not Yuki's nature. If I stay silent for a while, then...

“But isn't hearing my directions convenient? It's easy to understand, right?”

Because she was coming in like this... there wasn't a moment of boredom for me. Before navigation systems existed, a person holding a map would often give directions to the driver like this.

‘This is fun in its own right.’

Eventually, we arrived at our designated restaurant per Yuki's guidance. Honestly speaking, even though the restaurant was highly rated, there was no way I would drive from Kyoto to Gobei if I was alone.

Gobei, situated past Osaka, was famous for its Japanese beef; its reputation was similar to the natural beef region in Korea.

“Wow~ This restaurant is huge!”

Yuki was like an excited kid let loose in an amusement park as she stood in front of the giant cow painting in front of the restaurant. She took out her camera that she brought and started taking pictures.

Snapping pictures of restaurants and stores were commonplace in the 21st century, but the people inside the restaurant were looking at Yuki with an inquisitive eye.

“Excuse me... but what are you doing?”

The store manager finally came out of the restaurant and asked Yuki; she turned bright red and started explaining.

“I'm a writer working at a broadcasting station, and I'm in the process of drafting a program script for Japan's best restaurants.”

“Oho... Best restaurants?”

“Yes. I’ve heard that this restaurant serves the best beef in the Gubei district from my investigations, so I’m taking pictures of the exterior. Sorry for not speaking with you about this.”

In response, the manager tilted his sideways for a moment before suddenly widening his eyes like an enlightened buddhist monk and shouted.

“If it’s like that, you should’ve told me earlier!!”

And he dashed into the restaurant and immediately came back with a chef.

“Now~ You can take a picture.”

“I wanted to capture a more natural scene...”

“You should still take a picture as a commemoration. If your program goes live, I’ll ask you to take care of us. So Gubei’s premium Wagyu beef should be synonymous with our restaurant~!!”

“Yes, thank you.”

Click.

After Yuki finished taking the picture, the manager extended his

hands towards Yuki and spoke.

“You two are dating, correct? Give me the camera. I’ll take a nice picture for you guys. Afterall, I majored in film.”

D, dating? As I desperately waved my hands in denial from the back, Yuki quickly handed the camera over to the manager and clamored.

“Yes~!! Thank you~!!”

Yuki locked her arms with me and spoke.

“Smile~ Mr. Junhyuk.”

“Ah... Yes, haha....”

&

We filled our stomachs to the brim with bonus dishes from the manager and wanted to walk for a while before riding the car again. Luckily, there was a walking trail right next to the restaurant so Yuki and I started walking the forest path together.

“Ah, I’m too full.”

“Yep, we overate...”

“But the food was amazing.”

“Don’t you think I ate too much expensive dishes from you?”

I was thankful enough that she came all the way to Kyoto to buy a meal for free with her prize money, but to think she’d buy me premium beef... But Yuki shook her head and replied.

“Not at all~ I’ve always wanted to come here too. A senior from the station is from Gubei, and she was bragging so much about how delicious the beef from this restaurant was. But I came here safely thanks to you, Mr. Junhyuk. Owning a car is amazing after all~”

It was a bit chilly walking on the winter trail, but the cool air exuded a refreshing feeling.

“Mr, Junhyuk.”

“Yes?”

“Have a safe trip to America.”

“Ah... Thank you.”

“And when you come back... I’d like it if you’d just call me Yuki instead of “Miss Yuki”.”

As I looked at Yuki's brightly smiling face, I unconsciously nodded my head as I replied.

"Ah, alright. I'll do that."

&

January 7th. Inside the airplane.

After stretching my arms out and yawning in my business class seat, I asked a question to the passing stewardess.

"Excuse me, how much time is remaining until arrival?"

"There's 30 minutes left, sir. I hope you've had a pleasant ride so far."

"I've had a great flight so far. Thank you."

"You slept really well, were you having a good dream?"

"I don't quite remember, but I think I did. Excuse me, could I have another glass of water? My throat is dry."

"Yes, please wait a moment."

The stewardess answered and lightly bowed her head with a bright smile before walking off to fetch the water.

As I sated my thirst and opened the plane's window, the runway was already in sight.

A moment later. The plane landed in New York's JFK airport and woke Mr. Gunpei who'd been sleeping until the landing.

"Mr. Gunpei, we're here. It's the airport."

"Already...?"

What do you mean already... We've spent almost 20 hours on the plane; if anyone else saw this conversation, they'd think we were taking a bus from Kyoto to Tokyo.

I helped the groggy Mr. Gunpei pick up the bags, and we headed to the departure hall. Of course, there was the immigration interrogatio, but there wasn't any problem as we showed them our Japanese business Visa. We've also spent a year in America a while back...

Mr. Gunpei, who had been sleeping for most of the flight and barely touched the airplane food, was fatigued with hunger. After finally leaving the exit terminal and helping pull Mr. Gunpei's carrier, a familiar voice greeted us.

"Director~!! Here!!"



I turned my head in response to the voice of Elise and saw Mr. Yamashita and Mr. Wilso waiting for us too. My eyes were moistening despite my efforts, as I saw these familiar faces after 3 years.

“Mr. Wilson! Mr. Yamashita!! Elise!!”

Mr. Gunpei who was next to me looked over at them and spoke.

“Kang-kun, you’re also popular in America, haha.”

“Let’s go. Before anything else, you must be hungry so let’s have a meal first.”

“Alright. I’m actually starving.”

“Who told you to sleep the entire flight?”

“Airplane food makes me sick for some reason, you know?”

“Oh how terrible. Let’s go.”

Mr. Gunpei snickered as he followed behind me.

&

There weren't any particular problems to fix in the day-to-day operations.

As there were no consoles that came close to the Family's popularity, the launch of Mintendo's mobile Gamboy was projected to go without a hitch in America. (An entirely different situation from when we first brought the Family to America)

Compared to three years prior when the public's reception to video games were mostly negative, the console industry was steadily flourishing now.

"The difference between back then and now is like the heaven and earth..."

Mr. Gunpei must've been thinking the same thing as he muttered while smoking a cigarette after his meal.

While we were eating, we grouped into 2 teams to use the one month period effectively. Mr. Yamashita and Mr. Gunpei decided to oversee the launching of the mobile Gamboy in the U.S 3 months later, while Elise and I planned to market the Psychic Battle.

Mr. Wilson was steadily increasing the number of Mintendo's chain stores while simultaneously suppressing Toyworld in every aspect.

The number of employees under him had increased staggeringly;

the owner of a closing-down toy store was managing six stores now.

“Mr. Wilson, you’ve become unrecognizable from a few years back.”

“Everything couldn’t have happened without you, Mr. Kang. I still reminisce upon this memory every now and then: the tense face of the young Korean gentlemen who stepped through the tiny doors of my shop and took out the Family...

“Ah~ you’re embarrassing me.”

“No. After I die, if god asks me what was the best moment of my life, meeting you on that fateful day will be my answer.”

Mr. Wilson smiled at me with a deeply wrinkled pair of eyes. I turned my head to make out the conversation of the two Japanese behind me before speaking to Mr. Wilson.

“You’re expanding the premium stores like I’ve told you to?”

“Of course. Every time I add a store to our growing coterie of shops with the money you’ve wired, we’re increasing our business under both our names. “

“You’re doing great. Please continue with that.”

“But, I have a question. Where is all that money coming from? Even the successful director of Mintendo shouldn’t be able to put their hands on that kind of money...”

“I tend to have a lot of money. Even the HQ doesn’t know this, but I own several factories that produce cartridges, and have also developed software.”

“What did you say!? You’re managing all that by yourself?”

“Actually, my ventures are being managed just like how you’re doing an excellent job growing the business here in America, Mr. Wilson.”

“Ha~ You’re network is incredible for such a young person. Don’t you have any thoughts on starting your own company with that sort of human resources and capital?”

“I’m planning to do just that. But it’s not the right time yet.”

# Chapter 49 :

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“Why is that...?”

“Mintendo is currently the most popular platform amongst both third party software companies and the customers. Jumping into the current console market is no different than burning the investment money. Even NEGA’s current generation console with its superior hardware is lagging behind Mintendo. The battle for this generation of console is over.”

“Then what about the next generation?”

“Mintendo will continue to grow as they earn even more recognition from the population. With the Family Series’ next expansion, the Mintendo brand will spread all over the world.”

In response to my simple prediction, Mr. Wilson was greatly taken aback and asked.

“So you’re saying Mintendo’s monopoly will propagate to the next generation?”

“Why? Isn’t that great news for you, Mr. Wilson?”

“Of course, the growth of Mintendo will benefit me. But as with all monopolies, one corporation controlling every aspect of the market will eventually begin to break apart. The Atari Shock is a perfect example. I’m concerned about a reoccurrence of that

event.”

“Don’t worry too much. Mintendo won’t lose their momentum until at least until the next generation.”

“Until the next generation? Then you’re aiming for...”

“Yes. I will be targeting the next generation of consoles.”

“You’ll be targeting the next generation of consoles when you haven’t even developed anything yet?”

“When one sits on the throne for a long period of time, they tend to grow complacent. A small opening to enter the market will be created then. And when that moment comes, Mintendo will have grown to a conglomerate in the entertainment industry.”

“Phew. If anyone else made these claims, I would’ve kicked them in the ass and took them for a drug test. But hearing it coming out of your mouth, I’m starting to believe it.”

“When that time comes, you will have to cut ties with all Mintendo products. Don’t hoard items in some corner like you did in the Atari Shock.”

“But there is a lot of exciting games for the Family console, I don’t think anything bad will come out of keeping some? Game cartridges don’t rot, do they?”

“Haha, by that time, cartridges won’t be in use anymore. Keke...”

“What...?”

Mr. Wilson tilted his head in confusion to my words. At that moment, Elise came out of her car and shouted at us.

“Mr. Kang and Mr. Wilson, let’s move to the hotel first. Load your bags in my trunk.”

Oh? A hotel was already reserved for us? Could it perhaps be a 3rd rate hotel like last time?

“Ms. Elise, I will take care of reserving the hotel myse...”

“Don’t worry. I’ve booked a business room in a 5 star hotel to suit your needs, Director Kang. It won’t be the king suite that you had 3 years ago, but you should have no problem staying here for one month.”

‘Hoh...’

At that moment, Mr. Yamashita suddenly rose from his seat and spoke to me.

“We can’t let the hero who revived Mintendo’s American branch stay in a run-down hotel, can’t we?”

(TL Note: Mr. Yamashita had previously reserved a crappy motel for Kang-kun 3 years ago)

“Thank you, then I’ll be in your care.”

After loading our bags into the trunk, we headed to a hotel in the middle of New York.

&

The next day, before Mr. Wilson opened his stores.

With the help of the store’s employees, I setup the experimental trial for the english version Psychic Battle.

These workers were astonished at the plethora of flying missiles in the screen, but as I gave them instructions on how to play, they happily began to enjoy the game.

As Chandra’s rearrangement of the source code had qualitatively improved the speed of the game to the next level, the initial reactions of the employees were good.

“This is really something?”

“How could a game like this run on an 8-bit console? What is this... sorcery?”



Mr. Wilson had also grabbed the gamepad to give it a go but was defeated before the 1st half of the 1st stage.

“This really is... Would a game this difficult ever be popular?”

“Back in Japan, games with an insane level of difficulty are the trend. Psychic Battle aside, the difficulty of video games as a whole rose. We will be marketing Psychic Battle by letting customers play it here before the official release date. For any player that clears the 1st stage, give them a poster illustration of their choice as the prize; Give any 2nd stage clearers an experimental cartridge. Players will start to get the hang of it after dying a few times and attempt to beat the game many times.”

“Alright, my employees will handle giving out the prizes. Where are you headed to now?”

“I have a place to visit with Elise. So I can entrust the promotion of Psychic Battle to the store employees?”

“Aye, we’ve got your back. You must be itching to explore after 3 years; take your time and leave the store front to us.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wilson.”

After saying my thanks to the store employees as well, I stepped out of the store. Elise was already waiting in front of the store with her car.

“Where should I take you, Director Kang?”

“First, let’s head to MIT’s engineering department.”

&

An Engineering College in Massachusetts.

Along with Harvard, MIT was the top school in the U.S catering to educating geniuses. As the #5 university in the world for producing nobel laureates, MIT was sometimes called a nobel-laureate-producing factory.

“Why are we going to MIT?”

“Ms. Elise, do you know where the first video game was made?”

“The first video game? I don’t know. I’ve never thought about that. Where was it made?”

“The very place we’re headed to.”

“What!? MIT produced the very first video game?”

“‘Space War,’ the very first graphic video game, was created by several MIT graduates in 1962. During that period, it garnered a

ton of popularity amongst MIT hackers, but it was ultimately a failure in the market.”

“So that was the case. But from what I know, MIT completely laid their hands off the video game industry after the Atari Shock event. Would... it be alright?”

“We’re not going to MIT to find a developer.”

“Then why?”

“MIT is an expert in operating computer hardware for various uses. I want to see if I can find some talents to collaborate with.”

“You’re recruiting for Mintendo?”

“Maybe.”

As I averted her question with a cryptic smile, Elise curled the tips of her lips upwards too.

“You’re definitely cooking up a plan~.”

Elise was considered an employee of Mintendo, but she was also one of the few, along with Mr. Wilson, who knew about my upcoming secret plans. Every time Mr. Wilson had expanded our coterie of premium stores, she was there to act as the legal witness; I’d been wiring money to her every month for this purpose.

After going through the process of stabilizing Mintendo's American branch with me, she had also put in every effort to grow the Mintendo brand under Mr. Yamashita after I left.

In response to Elise's comment, I merely grinned and looked out the window.

&

After a while, we arrived at the MIT campus in Cambridge. Even though it was the holiday seasons, the streets were brimming with tourists and students alike.

"I thought it'd be quieter during the break; well, I don't know if this is good or bad..."

After stepping out of the car, I muttered to myself and looked around my surroundings.

The time was a little over one, and Elise who had been driving for three and a half hours from New York let out a huge yawn.

"Should we eat before we go inside?"

"Sure, I was beginning to feel hungry anyways~."

We entered into a popular burger joint that students frequented.

As soon as we stepped inside, the aroma of the meat being cooked unintentionally triggered the saliva to ooze from my mouth.

“This restaurant must be famous...”

Elise was wearing a big smile on her face as if she had also fallen prey to the attack on the olfactory sense. As we waited around the entrance, a waiter came over and directed us to our table; Elise and I both ordered a full-course hamburger-steak meal.

Just as our sizzling hamburgers arrived, I took a camera from my bag.

“Why the camera?”

“I was requested to take pictures of foods in American restaurants by a friend back in Japan... Hold on.”

Per Yuki’s request, I pressed the shutter towards the steaming food.

“Pictures of foods? Is your friend a girl?”

“Yes, she’s working as an assistant script writer in a broadcasting station.”

“You have a girlfriend, Director Kang?”

“Mmm... I’m seeing someone I have good feelings for...”

“Wow~ Congratulations. I thought you weren’t interested in dating because you’re a workaholic.”

“I am busy, but that person is quite understanding of my situation.”

“She’s a good person. Please introduce me when I visit Japan later.”

Seeing Elise congratulate me, the thought of Elise in the airport from 3 years ago popped into my head. I nonchalantly asked her a question.

“Are you seeing anyone, Ms. Elise?”

“Me? Of course, I am~!!! I’m incredibly popular, you know!?”

Of course, a beauty of her calibre wouldn’t wait around for 3 years as a single. I smirked at my fantasy and started cutting the meat. At that moment, I overheard the conversations of two men who were sitting on the table opposite from me.

“What do you think? Did you run the file I sent you?”

“Yep. I didn’t know what was going on at first, but I was almost shocked speechless after I started pressing the arrow keys.”

“Keke, it’s fun, right? Didn’t it give off the feeling that you were trapped in an actual maze?”

“I mean, how were you able to think up a way to create a ‘space’ on the screen?”

Space? I immediately stopped cutting the steak and turned my attention to their conversation. Elise looked at me and asked.

“Director Kang, what’s the matter?”

“Shh, please wait.”

I slowly begin cutting my meat again while focusing on their conversation.

“I was initially planning to develop a house object whose interior could be seen. But I had an exciting revelation in my last art class...”

“Art class? Ah~ You’re talking about when you made that triangular pyramidal plaster?”

“Yeah, 4 sides were needed to create that work of art. Using this knowledge, I tried to replicate that on the computer, and it was easier than I’d expected.”

“You developed your program based on that?”

“What’s there not to develop? Coding it was almost like a form of origami. I connected three vertices together to form a 4 sided triangular pyramid. All that’s left was to fill in the spaces.”

“That’s easier said than done.”

He was right. There weren’t any tools like the 3D MAX in this era; to think he created a 3D effect with just the basic operations. He’s a complete genius! Who could he possibly be?

“Oi, John. So were you able to create a 360 degree graphic viewer?”

“Nope, I wasn’t able to finish it.”

“Why?”

“My computer could only handle displaying one triangular pyramidal shape. I tried to add more shapes, but it crashed. In the end, I was only able to program the outline for the maze by connecting the vertices.”

He was able to create a maze inside the monitor by simply connecting the vertices? His concept was the core foundation for all FPS games. I placed my fork down and tuned my full attention to their conversation without caring if my steak turned cold or not.



“As I was saying, I think an apparatus that can solely handle graphics will be needed to run my software. Maybe something like the central processing unit? Should I call it a graphics processing unit...?”

“There’s the Video Graphics Array card for that.”

“The VGA card merely transfers the command from the CPU to the monitor. What I’m talking about is another apparatus whose sole task is to render graphics and free up the load on the CPU.”

At that instant, I shouted ‘Bingo’ and grinned with my eyes closed. He’s pinpointed the exact points.

“Director Kang? Why aren’t you eating? You haven’t taken a single bite yet...”

‘Ms. Elise...’

“Yes?”

“I don’t think we need to go inside the school.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’ve already found who I want.”

# Chapter 50 :

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“I don’t think we need to enter the school anymore.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve already found who I want.”

That was right. I didn’t want a game developer. The various 3D polygons that were commonly found in modern games were first introduced in 1994 with NEGA’s Virtual Fighter. At that time, the game’s graphics had shocked the general populace, but in reality, there was a game in ‘88 that utilized polygons.

They were respectively ‘Hard Drive-in’ by Atari, who was almost on their last breaths, and ‘Winning Run’ from the Japanese software company, Bankosa.

At that period, the graphics of these racing games which used polygons only looked unique, but the game itself was a complete mess. Using dots(pixels) would’ve suited those games much better, but the fatal fault was that the driving mechanics felt as if one was floating in space, instead of simulating real driving.

Furthermore, the technology which inserted textures onto the polygon wasn’t developed yet, so the premature 3D polygon technology from these ‘88 games vanished at the speed of light in the memories of gamers. At least until ‘Virtual Fighter’ was released by NEGA.

“Ms. Elise, you go ahead and eat. I’ll be talking to the students over there.”

“Um, Director? Director!?”

I rose from my seat and dragged my chair over to the table of the talking students.

“Hello, who is this?”

“I’m sorry for disrupting your meal. I didn’t mean to eavesdrop, but your conversation was very interesting.”

“You were eavesdropping on our conversation?”

The student named John spoke while looking at me with an unfriendly expression. He must have been bothered by me intruding on the conversation.

I took out my business card from my wallet and placed it on the table. As John picked up the card, he tilted his head and asked.

“Isn’t Mintendo a company that develops gaming consoles?”

“That’s right.”

“We weren’t talking about games; we were in the middle of discussing the software for our architecture major...”

“Yeah, I’ve heard that, but I was primarily interested in the GPU that you were mentioning.”

“Excuse me, but it’s not the official name or anything like that. I threw out a random name on the spot as we were talking about hardware.”

“The naming doesn’t matter. The question is whether it can be made or not; you weren’t able to code a three-dimensional figure.”

As I said that probing comment, he immediately responded.

“That’s because of the limitations of the computer’s hardware. There’s no problems with my code.”

“The method that you spoke of will be hard to implement even with the current supercomputer. Adding the z axis to a x-y graph is a great method to simulate a 3D figure. You say that it has no relation to videogames, but there are a plethora of ways it could be used in video games. For example, a character can move inside the simulated 3D object to simulate reality. It has the possibility of revolutionizing new genres.”

“A game that utilizes 3D figures...”

John bit on his nails and went into deliberation. And a while

later, he started shaking his head as he retorted.

“No way. The map itself would have to be enormous in order to host the game, but what good would come out when the current hardware can barely display 4 polygons.”

“That’s exactly why we need it, the GPU that you were talking about. I never asked you to develop a game. What I need is an apparatus that can render graphics alongside the CPU.”

“So are you asking me to invent that?”

Why ask the obvious. A person who says he’ll dig a well should be the one digging the well.

&

In 2015, graphic cards were capable of rendering live videos past the basic 3D rendering. However, in the very early stages of graphics cards, VGA cards were incorporated into the motherboard in order to simply render the 3D graphics. I had requested John Curtis to engineer an apparatus similar to the 3Dfx from VooDoo.

We left the restaurant and headed to the famous ‘hack+’ club in MIT. As we entered the university, Elise asked a question to me with a worried expression.

“Director Kang? Are we going to be alright? I feel like we’ve stepped into an incredible place...”

“It’s an incredible place alright. You can say we’ve entered the playground of geniuses.”

“Play...ground?”

“Of course, it’s a bit different than an ordinary playground. Haha...”

John and Michael lead the way for us to arrive at a dark room illuminated only by the monitor lights. On the walls were several bunk beds touching each other back-to-back; and judging by the slight movements every now and then, it looked like someone was sleeping.

“Oi, everyone wake up.”

As John flipped the switch and turned on the lights, various moans sounded out from all over the room.

“Are you crazy John? Why the f\*\*\* did you turn the lights on now. I haven’t gotten a wink of sleep last night because of my part time.”

“Your part time job isn’t important right now, just wake up for a moment.”

In response to John, the sleeping gurus started to wake up one by

one and pack their sleeping bags.

This scene conjured an image of sleeping little fairies that were waking up in my mind, and a smile broke out on my face.

If there was a ‘Dwarf’ that crafted weapons in the fantasy world, these individuals here might be the equals in real life.

“John... What’s the occasion?”

A fellow who woke up just now was growing a bear that was unsuited for his age.

‘One bearded guru’

“John? You said you were going out to eat, and you haven’t brought anything back for me?”

‘One buck-teeth shorty guru.’

“Who are the people standing next to you?”

‘One skeleton guru who looks like he’ll fall down with a single flick.’

A total of five gurus, including John and Michael, were staring at us. At that moment, Elise who was hiding behind me poked her

head up and introduced herself.

“Hello. My name is Elise and I work at Mintendo’s American branch. Pleased to meet you all...”

“A girl!!! Oh my god!!”

“What? Why is there a girl in our dorm room!?”

“Who is it!? Who’s her boyfriend!! Everyone stop moving!! Whoever moves is the culprit!! F\*\*\*!! Traitor!!”

The three gurus that were wide awake now all displayed different reactions to Elise’s presence. John must’ve been embarrassed by their behavior and scratched his head as he introduced them one by one.

“Starting from the skinny one on the left is Tom, Hank and Rob. There’s a few more, but they’re doing part time jobs on the holidays to buy computer parts; they should be back at night.

“Mmm? Who’s the asian guy next to you?”

What? They’re only recognizing me now after Elise?

...Well, it wouldn’t be a great feeling to receive attention from men either...



I should've brought Chandra on this trip; he would've instantly connected with these guys.

John and Michael had given them a brief summary on what happened in the restaurant. After a few sentences, they must've understood the gist as Rob, the bearded one, opened his mouth.

“John, so you're saying we should make an apparatus that can render graphics alongside the CPU?”

“Right, it shouldn't be too hard to make a separate memory renderer specifically for graphics.”

“Well, if it isn't a licensed product that can be mass produced in a factory, we should be able to make one or two models. But there is a problem.”

(TL Note: For a product to be mass produced in a factory, it must be made in a specific way so factory machines can replicate it)

With a tired expression, Rob spoke while rubbing his beard.

“There's no such thing as a free meal. What will be our compensation?”

John shrugged his shoulders while taking a step back and looked at me.

“Rob’s right. Your offer to fund the research is great, but these guys aren’t the type to work without any compensation.”

Hmm... Is it my turn? I took one step forward towards Rob and asked.

“As I’m working in the game industry, I’m also aware of how much time and effort it’ll take to make the device. That’s why I plan to send you all a monthly stipend along with the research fee. Please speak, how much do you guys want?”

In response, Rob snorted and wore a smirk on his face.

“You’re talking like you’d provide us with any amount we’d request? You don’t look that old either.”

Oh? He’s coming in strong? But I couldn’t show any hesitancy here. Instead, I smiled confidently and responded.

“As long as the amount isn’t unrealistic, I can sponsor you guys.”

If they request an unrealistic amount, it’d be cheaper to have Chandra make the GPU... At that moment, Rob who had been twiddling his fingers, opened his mouth with an evil smile on his face.

“First of all, we’re investing our personal time into this project. We’d be working on it late at night after our classes; we’ll be starving by then, as well as various travel expenses, giving up our

part time jobs, buying the parts, so...”

He’s meticulously calculating alright, how much does he want...

Rob pretended to be lost in thought for a while before continuing with a mischievous smile.

“You’d have to add at least 500 dollars per pers...”

“Okay~ deal!!!”

I shouted out before Rob could finish his sentence. I thought they would say something like 1 million... What a humble bastard... This is going to be much cheaper than I expected.

“Miss Elise, did you bring the contract?”

“Of course, Director Kang.”

“Let them sign the contract first, and I’ll let you take down their bank account information. We’ll be sending them a stipend starting next month; please take of them.”

“Yes, of course.”

I’ll have to check Chandra’s VISA status when I return to Japan next month. I watched the gurus who were quickly signing the

contract and a smile appeared on my face.

&

On the way back from MIT, I was glancing out the window while chortling every so often. To think that the amount he came up with after all that talking was only 500 dollars...

To them, my idea was a simple supporting apparatus that would help the CPU render graphics, but little did they know, the GPU would revolutionize the gaming industry just as much as the impact of the first step on the moon to humanity did.

Of course, it would revolutionize the field of architecture as well.

The utility of 3D renderings was such that architects would be able to design and zoom in on buildings rather than drawing them out by hand.

This is how I knew that the product they were about to create would bring in the most amount of money to me.

# Chapter 51 :

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Currently, I had around 2.2 billion Yen in my bank account. My financial situation hadn't changed much from when I first arrive at this era.

I had invested in over six premium shops in New York City, as well as sponsoring the cartridge production for Dragon Emblem with my money. Although the game was a huge success, it was hard for me to see any noticeable returns.

Thankfully, I was able to procure some profits for myself with the specialty chip which improved the Family's capabilities that Chandra had invented.

I was in the same financial situation from back then, but I built up an excellent social presence as well as a vast business network that allowed me to recruit MIT engineering majors...

Would I be unhappy?

“Aren't you the elated one, Director Kang!”

“Is it obvious?”

“Very much so.”

“Ah~ I should head back to the office and work on my facial

expressions then. Miss Elise, you have to keep today's events a secret from Mr. Yamashita and Mr. Gunpei.”

“もちろん、カン監督” (Of course, Director.)

“Oh~ Your accent is great!”

“After you flew back to Japan, I've been practicing Japanese by myself [relentlessly].”

“Do you still want to work at the Mintendo HQ?”

“Of course. I'm still learning Japanese so maybe in 1~2 years? I do want to be employed at the HQ as soon as possible, if it wasn't for Mr. Yamashita and James...”

“James?”

“Ah, he's my boyfriend. Also, I have a dinner planned with him today, do you want to come with us?”

“Me? Eyy~ I'm good. I don't want to be the third wheel b\*stard intruding on your date.”

“He's not the type to care about that, not to mention me. It's fine!”

No, I'm not fine...

As I politely refused her offer with an awkward smile, Elise did not ask anymore.

---

“Then, I'll see you tomorrow, Director Kang~.”

“Drive safely, Miss Elise. I hope your date goes well~.”

Vroom~

After dropping me off in front of Mr. Wilson's store, Elise immediately steered her car to the departing lane and drove off.

I stared at the back of Elise's car until it disappeared before turning my head around to look at Mr. Wilson's store. As it was the holiday season, there were many bustling customers inside the store.

A crowd was gathered around the experimental trial station near the display window, trying out our various games. Amongst them, a few were able to clear the stages and were happily holding the corresponding prizes.

Morita's illustrations were especially popular as one of the prizes; He'd love to hear about this when I go back to Japan.

---

Dawn. I borrowed a car from Mr. Yamashita and visited MIT.

The distance from New York to Boston was around 350km. It wasn't a short ride by any means, but I felt the necessity to oversee the development, so I could better explain it to Chandra.

Thankfully, MIT did not restrict outsiders from entering; I was able to find my way into the 'Hack+' club room without much trouble.

The 7 members from yesterday were gathered around a table holding a meeting.

After all, inventing a computer part from scratch wasn't an easy task. The very first step was constructing a blueprint for the development goals.

“Ah, hello again.”

As I entered the room, 7 different pairs of eyes immediately focused onto me. A few shifted their gazes to my backside. Were they looking for Elise? Unfortunately, Elise was currently working with Mr. Yamashita.

“Is he our patron? He looks be around the same age as us. Does he know how to speak English?”



“Yeah, don’t worry. He’s really good.”

John reintroduced me to everyone again. The average age of the students was in their early 20s, so my physical body was a little older. However, I became friendly with them after a few conversations.

As the meeting resumed, I sat down in a corner and began to take notes.

“As John said earlier, I agree that we would need an independent memory for a device that would lessen the burden on the CPU. If both the CPU and our VGA were sharing a single memory, it’s bound to overload.”

“The price of production would increase, but we have no choice but to add a separate memory to decrease the load on the CPU. Before we draw the outline, let’s run through the logistics.”

In response to Rob’s statement, I tilted my head and asked.

“Already? You guys haven’t bought the necessary parts yet.”

“What are you talking about, the materials are already here.”

Rob pointed at the pile of computer parts in the corner of the room and flashed a grin. Contrary to my expectation, the method

they came up with was simple. I thought these MIT geniuses would think up some extraordinary development method, but the first plan proposed by Rob was utilizing 2 computers.

It was the “brute force method” but was nonetheless effective. By linking two motherboards together, one would be used to handle the CPU while the other would render the graphics. With this, both motherboards would be able to utilize the 1 MB of memory independently. But would it be this easy?

Even if the two motherboards were connected, a ‘driver’ to configure the memory card to graphic rendering was needed.

This was their first hurdle; They needed to rewrite the Bios setting for the memory to be optimized for graphics rendering.

“This isn’t going to be easy. We should set up the Bios first before we draw out our next plan.”

The other team members nodded to Rob’s words before adding in their own comments. If Chandra were here, he would’ve been able to exchange ideas with the team. What a shame...

---

Like that, 10 days had passed.

“Hey... it’s working!”

As Jack shouted out, the members and I who were inside our sleeping bags rubbed our eyes open. During the past 10 days of me working with them on the graphic driver, I had adopted their exact lifestyle.

“It is!! F\*ck!!”

“Wh, What!? What’s working?”

I jumped down from my bed and took a look at the monitor. On display was 2 pyramid-shaped polygons which were spinning in a clockwise direction, albeit with a bit of static.

“Oh!! F\*ck!! Jesus Christ!!”

Shouts of joy exploded from all around the room as various figures erupted from their sleeping bags and rushed towards the monitor. The connected PCs were operating as a single unit with two independent memories.

We huddled together and pranced around like the seven dwarves from Snow white. The graphic might’ve looked pathetic to the moderners, but this was a huge step forward for us. But our joy was short-lived... As we were whooping and hooting, Rob looked at the graphic rendering motherboard with a serious expression and opened his mouth.

“But how are we going to reduce an entire computer to the size of a chip?”

The room turned silent. Now... the joyful mood was gone. Was it time to bring up the “magical” bonus compensation talk?

---

Yet another 2 weeks had passed...

After dinner, I was playing a 3:3 basketball match with the team. We had figured out a general outline for the 3D rendering chip, but there was still too much work. They had to consult their professors for some of the complex technicalities to draw a blue print.

“You said you were flying back to Japan next week?”

Jack and Rob were wearing despondent expression as my departure date drew nearer; we had become close during the past few weeks exercising and drinking together. Especially Rob, who had been an avid fan of Psychic Battle, requested me to send him a signature from the developer of the game.

If I had only been thinking about using them for their skills, I would never have formed a friendship with them. Programmers had a certain pride in their unique method of coding, and they would never open up to others who didn't understand their methods. As I had been working with them since the Bios setup, they must've acknowledged me to some extent.

Bounce~

I bounce passed the ball to Rob as I spoke.

“I will keep my promise. A signature from the developer of Psychic Battle~!!”

“Yeah~!! Thanks for remembering. But who exactly is the main programmer of Psychic Battle?”

“Me.”

“What!?”

“Just kidding~.”

“Of course you were joking. You can code efficiently, but it’s not to the extent of Psychic Battle~.”

“I really am the main developer. But my friend completely reorganized my code.”

“You really are the developer!? Aside from that, your friend was able to rewrite your entire code!?”

Each programmer had their unique method of coding; they would organize class and loops in a certain way, so it was very difficult for someone else to be able to rewrite the entire code their way.

“You can’t believe it either, right? But it’s the truth. He’s a genius.”

“Is he Japanese?”

“No, Indian.”

“Oh. I hope I get a chance to meet him.”

“You should bring the entire crew to Japan in the summer. I’ll book a hotel for you guys.”

“Really? You’re great!”

...

As soon as Rob passed the ball, I bounced the ball once before bending my knees to shoot from the 3-point line.

Shhpp~!!

The ball dropped from the hoop along with the satisfying thump sound.

“Take things slowly. All you have to do is finish the blueprint by summer.”

“You said take it easy and want us to have the blueprint ready by summer. You have no soul~.”

Jack came over and passed the ball on the ground back to me.

“You don’t think you can do it? Oh well~ I guess you won’t receive your bonus~”

“You miserable b\*stard~ Keke.”

“If you think it’s unfair, go earn money yourself~ Haha~.”

We emptied the entire bottle of beer while we cursed each other into the night.

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The next day.

After acquiring the license to sell the Gamboy, Mr. Wilson was installing the display model in front of a premium store.

## Chapter 52 :

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Even though the shop wasn't open yet, there was a gaggle of children who found the shop through a magazine and were peering inside the store.

A mischievous thought popped into my head; as I picked up a Gamboy and waved it around with a ridiculous face, an eruption of laughter sounded out from outside the shop. Watching this scene, Elise spoke to me with a grin.

“Director Kang, I didn't know you could make that sort of a face!”

“Hahaha. Aren't these kids waiting for our shop to open just delightful?”

“I think there are reporters from the media here as well. Director, you're going to be on the news if you act like that... Hehe”

Mr. Wilson also peered out the window and wrinkled an eyebrow before chiming in.

“Mmm... It looks like there are a few people from Toy World too.”

As I turned my head, a few individuals who looked to be from Toy World stood out. They averted their gaze as soon as they made



eye contact with me. Since we refused to supply Toy World with our products from three years ago, we've had a sour relationship ever since.

As the shop entrance finally opened, the crowd waiting outside all stormed inside and crowded around the experimental trial station. I handed a Gamboy to one boy and carefully explained the instructions.

Mr. Wilson was swamped with interviews from reporters, and Mr. Gunpei was busy taking pictures of the kids on the experimental trial station to write a report for HQ.

At that moment, a young man snatched the Gamboy from the little boy and examined the device with a friend beside him before speaking.

“Oof... the display is hurting my eyes!!! The CPU seems to be slow on top of that; playing action games will be impossible on this device. I can just feel my eyesight worsening when I'm staring at it.”

“Is that all? My wrists are starting to hurt from holding it for a few seconds; there are probably four batteries in here.”

“A device that kids will be playing with shouldn't strain the wrists. I feel like the device would shatter if it's dropped by accident due to its heavy weight.”

What? What in the world is this rehearsed soulless skit? It'd be hard for me to express the Gamboy's advantage in three seconds like that.

However, the expressions of the parents who were accompanying their child began to harden in response to the conversation of the two men.

“That makes sense. Staring at this tiny screen for a long time could worsen your eyesight.”

“An expensive device like this costing over 150 dollars shouldn't be able to break easily... My son likes to rough-handle his toys...”

The effects of their little skit sure was great. But as they were valid concerns, the reporters who were interviewing Mr. Wilson started to give out furtive glances,

“Phew... I didn't want to go this far...”

With a long sigh, I approached the men who were holding the Gamboy and stretched my hand out.

“Can I see the device for a moment?”

As I, a Mintendo employee, politely asked for the device from the duo, the man handed the Gamboy to me with a half-dazed expression.

“Is this heavy? This mobile Gamboy is 300 grams with four batteries inside. If you feel the pressure from a mere 300 grams, I think you should work out regularly. This device definitely is not light, but it can’t be called wrist-breaking either. And...”

As I repeatedly dropped the Gamboy up-and-down into the floor, the heads of the crowd followed my movements. Once enough people were focused, I threw the device upwards almost touching the store ceiling and took a step back.

“Don’t be surprised.”

“Uh... Oh, OH!?”

Kroom~!!

The Gamboy fell to the ground with a heavy thud. The impact was strong enough to eject the cartridge and the batteries that were inside.

In the middle of a stunned crowd, Mr. Gunpei alone was faintly smiling.

“The cartridge... where did it go?”

I picked up the cartridges and batteries that flew off the device and inserted them back into the Gamboy. And I handed it back to

the man while speaking.

“Please check.”

“No way~ I clearly heard a shattering sound, how can it still function?”

As the man turned the power back on with a disbelieving expression, a clear background music sounded out.

“It’s... fine?”

I ignored the flustered man and borrowed a Gamboy from a nearby kid for a brief moment to talk about the front dials.

“As you can see, there are two dials here. One controls the volume, and the other controls something called a ‘brightness contrast.’ With this, you can adjust the brightness of the screen. You’d be able to enjoy the Gamboy on a brighter display in exchange for a shorter battery life. But, what these men said isn’t necessarily wrong; your eyes will become strained after extended usage. However, it’s the same when you read a school textbook for a long time as well. The human eye is bound to deteriorate after focusing on an object for a long period. It’ll be up to the parents to control the device usage of their children.”

I went down on my knees to hand the Gamboy back and spoke.

“A good boy should only play 1 hour a day.”

“Okay, thank you sir~”

I patted the kid on the head before standing up to look at the two men.

“A while ago, I saw you snatching a Gamboy from another kid. Aren’t you embarrassed to call yourselves grown men?”

“Are you looking down on us!?”

In response, a boy’s mom pointed at the men and shouted.

“These men were the ones who cut the line back when we were waiting in front of the entrance. They were swearing at this store while there were kids around too; my face turned beet-red.”

As soon as she spoke, the atmosphere turned sour in an instant. After realizing that their plan to disrupt our business was exposed, the two men slowly started backing away towards the entrance before hurriedly sprinting out the door.

I gathered my hands to my mouth and shouted to their retreating back.

“Tell President Tom that Junhyuk Kang sends his regards~!! He’ll know who I am!!”

---

After this slight mishap, the Gamboy's opening day proceeded without a hitch.

Mr. Wilson had just finished an interview and wiped his sweat away before opening his mouth.

“What were you thinking when you dropped the Gamboy to the ground?”

“It was to clear away any misconceptions of course.”

“What if it really shattered!!”

Mr. Gunpei, who had approached us, answered Mr. Wilson's question.

“It will never shatter. Right after the first prototype Gamboy was developed, he took the device and slammed it on the ground.”

“What?”

“We have carpets here, but he threw it on a rock-solid ground. The prototype shattered of course, and this is what he said afterwards.”

-This is something kids will play with. It must be able to withstand a fall.-

“Phew...”

Mr. Wilson exhibited a shocked expression in response to Mr. Gunpei’s words. Indeed, I had been startled back then as well. Yamauchi had thrown the device on the ground without any warning... I let out a smirk after remembering Mr. Gunpei’s frozen face back then.

---

A few days later.

After Mr. Gunpei and I concluded our business in America, we boarded the plane heading back to Japan. Mr. Yamashita, Mr. Wilson and Elise had stayed at the airport to see us off until takeoff with a bright smile.

“I thought staying here for a month would be more than enough time, but it feels too short now.”

“Yeah... On the bright side, the initial reception to our Gamboy was great! We can expect it to be a huge hit when we start the official marketing.”

“Your Psychic Battle didn’t lose in terms of popularity either. It’ll definitely be a sweeping sensation if it is released on the right date.”

“Oh? Haven’t I told you about its release date already, Mr. Gunpei? Psychic Battle’s release date been set.”

“What? When?”

“February 10th.”

“What!? That’s 3 days after we land in Japan. No, that’s beside the point. On...”

“Yes. Dragon Warrior 3 will also be released on the same day.”

The prequels of Dragon Warrior 3, Dragon Warriors 1 & 2, were hailed as legendary titles due to their staggering cartridge sales.

“Even if it was promoted extensively, I think competing with the Dragon Warriors series will be difficult as Psychic Battle is brand new series. Releasing both titles on the same day will have an impact on the sales without a doubt.”

“That’s fine; selling Psychic Battle on a mass scale was impossible in the first place because of the incorporated specialty chip. But there are several benefits to this.”

“That we’d be unable to satisfy their demand?”

“A better way to put it would be: we are building a yearning to buy something that can’t be bought?”



“ ... ”

Yes... A type of marketing strategy where customers won't be able to buy not because they lack the funds, but because there is no more stock. For example, there was the 'Honey Butter Chip' fad which shook the entire nation before my time slip.

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Wednesday, February 10th, 1988. Inside the train headed to Akihabara, Tokyo...

It was the start of another day to ordinary citizens. But to gamers, especially Dragon Warrior fans, today was a very special day.

Seeing a corporate employee who had kept glancing at his wristwatch and the route map from a while ago, it seemed that there was something on his mind.

‘Should... I stop by Akihabara to buy Dragon Warrior 3?’

‘What if it's sold out by the time I get off work?’

‘No, the stock should be enough.’

‘But Dragon Warrior 2 was sold out on its release day!?’

‘They should’ve adequately prepared for Dragon Warrior 3’s release then.’

‘Should I just stop by Akihabara to buy the game before work?’

‘Would I be able to make it in time?’

I swallowed my laughter seeing the concerned expressions of the people on the train and leaned my body on the wall. Subsequently, Mr. Shigeru who was sitting besides me opened his mouth.

“Hey, aren’t you nervous at all?”

“What do you mean?”

“Your Psychic Battle is also going to be released today.”

“Ah... right.”

“ ‘Ah... right?’ What’s with your lackluster response? Have you given up because of the competition from Dragon Warrior 3?”

“No way. My marketing strategy for Psychic Battle was a bit unique, so I’m not expecting much on the first day.”

Kumamoto Shigeru’s Super Marigee 3 was postponed to the fall

of 1988.

(TL Note: Reminder that Shigeru didn't develop the Dragon Warrior series)

He had declared war on my Psychic Battle with his Super Marigee, but with him being a perfectionist, it seemed there were quite a few things that he had to touch up on.

I wasn't that interested in Mr. Shige's bet in the first place, but I felt a bit disappointed at Super Marigee's late release date. That was one of the reasons why I decided to hasten the release for Psychic Battle to match Dragon Warrior 3.

Of course, there were dissenting opinions from the board at first, but the thought of competing against Japan's number one RPG game had roused my competitive spirit.

A while later. As our train approached the Akihabara station, a strange event unfolded.

## Chapter 53 :

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There were no schools near here, but a hoard of male students in uniforms stepped off the train. A corporate employee stared at the door with a hesitant look, before making the sudden decision to step off the train just as the door was about to close, and was followed by several other employees.

“Are all these people really here for Dragon Warrior 3...?”

“We should be getting off here as well.”

With a doubtful mind, Mr. Shige and I stepped out of the Akiba station only to be greeted by a huge crowd in front of the station.

“Hoh... Isn’t today a weekday? Why are there so many people here!?”

“Y...Yeah.”

Lines were formed in front of every game shop; the Dragon Warrior theme song was blaring from the speakers to create a lively atmosphere.

In the middle of the event was a female reporter who was covering the current situation of Akiba into the camera.

“The release date for the highly anticipated Dragon Warrior 3

game has finally arrived. There's a huge crowd gathered here in Akihabara, Tokyo, and despite today being a weekday, many students in school uniforms are standing in line to buy the game. It seems that there are many corporate employees here as well. Let's have a talk with someone standing in line."

However, everyone was covering their face like a criminal because they were too shy to appear on TV. Why were they embarrassed when they came out here to buy a game today? Oh, they must have been worried about being caught skipping school or work!

As no one wanted to talk with the female reporter, she started looking around helplessly. At that moment, she spotted me and Mr. Shige. Mr. Shige, who was beside me, muttered under his breath.

"Woah... That reporter is hot. She's just my type~."

"Excuse me, you guys are company employees, right!?"

Oh? Is she trying to interview us? My prediction was correct; the reporter gestured the cameraman who was taking pictures to follow her and ran over to us. As a result, Mr. Shige turned red and shouted at me.

"Hey!! Let's run!!"

"What? Why?"

“Oh? Uhm... We’re going to be recorded.”

“What’s wrong with being recorded?”

As a matter of fact, this was an incredible opportunity for me.

“Hello, I’m Katsura Misato from Fuji TV. Would you like to talk with me about today’s event?”

I almost bursted out in laughter when I heard her name. With her appearance and name... She would turn into a huge star in 1995...

“Excuse me? Would you...”

“Ah, my friend over here would love to be inter...”

As I turned my head to my right, Mr. Shige had vanished into the crowd and was staring at me, hidden from view...

“You seem to be a corporate employee; why are you here today on a weekday morning? Are you here to buy the Dragon Warrior 3?”

Ms. Masato seemed anxious to start the interview and dived straight into the questions.

I responded.

“No.”

“What?”

Ms. Misato's face turned into shock as my answer went outside her prediction.

The gamers in the plaza started to gather around me as the interview seemed to intrigue them. Or maybe it might've been because of Ms. Misato's face~

They didn't want to be interviewed themselves, but they were fine with watching someone else being interviewed. Ms. Misato hesitated for a moment before brightly smiling and started asking her questions again.

“Then what business do you have in Akihabara today?”

“I came here to analyze the market; I am an employee at Mintendo.”

“Ah~ That's great. So you wanted to see the reception of Dragon Warrior 3 today~”

She really wanted to turn the topic around to Dragon Warrior 3,

didn't she...

So I responded.

“No.”

“What?”

Her left eyebrow twitched ever so slightly. She seemed to be getting annoyed as the interview wasn't going her way. After all, the people that she hoped to interview were students or employees who skipped school or their job to buy the Dragon Warrior title.

“Th, then what market are you trying to analyze?”

“Dragon Warrior 3 isn't the only game being released today.”

“Ah. that's right. What's the title of the other game?”

“Psychic Battle.”

At that moment, one person from the crowd spoke.

“What? Psychic Battle is being released today too?”

“I've never head that before... I thought the FamiTong magazine said Psychic Battle was going to be released around spring time.”



“Right? Now we have more titles to purchase!”

“Then which one should I buy?”

“What’s there to think about? Just buy both!! I’m going to buy both and survive this month with ramen, and ramen only.”

“Oh!! Right!! A true man would not hesitate in buying both!!”

“Woooah!!!!”

In response to the last man’s words, the crowd roared in agreement. Right. There was nothing to think about. Of course, that was only if they had enough money to spare. I asked Ms. Misato, who was shocked speechless by the crowd’s reaction.

“Is this a live broadcast?”

“No, the footage will be edited before airing in the evening news.”

“Then can I have a word?”

“Ah, sure. Go ahead.”

With Ms. Misato’s permission, I took out a golden ticket from my

jacket and showed it to the camera. Due to that slightly gloomy weather, it wasn't overly ostentatious, but it was enough to draw the attention of the crowd.

“Inside a select few Psychic Battle cartridges will be this golden ticket. Whoever finds the golden ticket will gain automatic admission to Mintendo's sponsored Psychic Battle event.”

In response, one man who had been standing behind me yelled out.

“What kind of an event? We can't enter without that ticket?”

“No, you can gain entrance without the ticket. All you have to do is bring a cartridge of psychic battle with the entire game cleared. In the Psychic Battle event, you can purchase various products; we're also planning to host a competition with prize money for the participants. Please read this month's edition of the FamiTong magazine for specific details.”

“So the all-cleared cartridge itself can be the entrance ticket as well... Very unique!”

“I tried Psychic Battle out at the last Mintendo event, and the difficulty level is no joke. The prize for clearing 2 stages was a free demo cartridge, so I tried three times, yet I couldn't even clear the first stage...”

“Really? Sh\*t... Should I buy Psychic Battle instead of Dragon

Warrior? I don't have much money left..."

The news regarding Psychic Battle began to spread at a breakneck pace. Misato looked around with vacant eyes before coming to her senses and backed away from me.

"You, what did you do just now!?"

"I'm in the middle of promoting a game that I made?"

She immediately realized that she'd been used by me and instantly turned red. Looking at her face, it seemed like she was ready to explode.

"If you didn't like that, you can edit it out later."

"Of course!! You're using our news channel to promote your own product; I'm at a loss for words!!"

"Haha, I'm sorry. Then, I'll be off~"

I turned my back to the fuming Misato and called out to Mr.Shige who was still hiding in the crowd.

"Mr. Shige!! Come on!!"

"Uh? Oh, right~"

Mr. Shige took a few glances at Ms. Misato while he ran towards me.

“Hey, weren’t you nervous?”

“What’s there to be nervous about? It wasn’t even a live broadcast.”

“That huge camera was placed right in front of your nose, and the beautiful reporter was asking questions right next to you; you’re telling me you weren’t nervous at all!?”

“That aside, I’m getting hungry, and we have time to spare; shall we go out for breakfast?”

“You want to have a meal in this situation? When Super Marigee was first released, I couldn’t touch a glass of water for the whole day.”

“My Psychic Battle will be completely sold out in 10 minutes. Let’s have a meal first; we can walk around and watch the Dragon Warrior sales after.”

“In 10 minutes? What’re you talking about? And what’s the deal with that golden ticket!?”

“I’ll tell you in the restaurant.”

---

Mr. Shige and I walked to a Yoshinoya around the train station. A Yoshinoya was a chain restaurant specializing in beef bowls; there was bound to be one near a train station. In exchange for a cheap price, the food was also ordinary...

The restaurant could be called the combination of Mcdonald's, a rapidly growing fast food chain, and a traditional Japanese restaurant.

I stirred the steaming beef bowl as I talked to Mr. Shige.

“There’s 200.”

“What is?”

“The total number of Psychic Battle cartridges in stock today.”

“Pfftt!!”

Mr. Shige spurted the water out from his mouth.

“Eyy... We’re eating right now...”

“Hey! Does that make any sense? Why did you only have 200 in stock?”

“That’s why today was a surprise release day.”

“Even then... Anyways, 200 cartridges will definitely be sold out in 10 minutes. So you’re going to release 200 cartridges every day?”

“No, I’ll release 100 cartridges after three days.

“Cough... Cough...”

Mr. Shige started continuously coughing while holding the cup of water as if he had a cold. I patted his back a few times and went back to eating my meal.

“What was the golden ticket for?”

“It’s a golden ticket, just like it’s name. Mr. Shige, are you familiar with Charlie and the Chocolate Factory?”

“Yes, it’s a children’s book.”

“A children’s book? It’s a piece of marketing genius.”

“Marketing genius, huh?”

“There are only 5 golden tickets hidden amongst the hundreds of millions of chocolates that are distributed throughout the entire

world. Compared to Willy Wonka, I'm being incredibly generous by distributing 500 tickets within Japan only."

In response, Mr. Shige looked at me with a stunned look on his face. Every game developer wanted his game to be enjoyed by many people. But seeing me deny selling to people who wanted to buy my game, it was no wonder he was shocked.

After a while, Mr. Shige spoke while chewing on a piece of beef.

"Actually, I was a bit jealous of you because of the overwhelming reception of Psychic Battle. That's why even though it may have seemed petty, I proposed the popularity competition with Super Marigee 3. But,"

Mr. Shige stared at me for a while before opening his mouth again.

"Would you have done the same if Super Marigee 3 was being released today?"

"Yes."

"Scary B\*stard."

## Chapter 54 :

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“Scary B\*stard.”

“Because the production speed of Psychic Battle will be slowed down by the specialty chip, I would have lost the sales race anyways.”

“I would be ahead in sales, yes. But what the players really want would be Psychic Battle; there won’t be any in stock even if they want to buy it.”

That was right. Mr. Shige’s thoughts were exactly what I had in mind. If I couldn’t mass produce the game, I would cultivate its desirability with marketing. A game that would be sold out the day the new batch comes in... How attractive a strategy would that be?

As my lips inadvertently twitched upwards, I hurriedly lifted the beef bowl up to hide my face and wolfed down a spoon.

---

After the meal.

Shouts were ringing out from the various game shops as we stepped into Akiba again.

“I was the 4th in line; what do you mean you don’t have any more Psychic Battle cartridges?”



“That’s, we’ve only had three Psychic Battle cartridges in stock. But we have a plenty of Dragon Warrior 3 cartridges here.”

“I’ll take one Dragon Warrior 3 then.”

Mr. Shige and I were walking around these shops while observing the current situation. As small shops were only stocked with 2~3 Psychic Battle cartridges, they were sold out almost immediately.

Players who weren’t able to buy a Psychic Battle cartridge were starting to sprint across the station to the shops on the other side. And Mr. Shige and I hastened our footsteps to follow them.

“Excuse me, are there any Psychic Battle cartridges left!?”

“No, they were sold out just a moment ago.”

It was the same situation everywhere. As video game stores weren’t included in major malls yet, there were voices ringing throughout the various alleys of Akiba searching for Psychic Battle. Only the lucky few would successfully purchase a Psychic Battle cartridge, while the rest would not even see the cover of the cartridge case.

“Do you guys have any Psychic Battle cartridges in stock!?”

“Our last customer bought the last cartridge... We’re terribly sorry.”

“Ahhhhhh!!!!!!”

At that moment. Mr. Shige and I heard a scream coming from the next store we were planning to visit. We stuck our head in to see what was going on and saw one uniformed male student holding a golden ticket from the cartridge. Oh? Someone discovered a golden ticket already?

“A golden ticket?”

“What’s that?”

Subsequently, another person who seemingly had also bought a Psychic Battle cartridge was shaking the package upside down. However, as the cartridge didn’t contain anything but the manual, he opened his mouth with a dejected face.

“I don’t have it?”

On the other side, the male student who was holding the golden ticket stared intently at it before opening his mouth to read the words on the ticket.

“Congratulations. You have been selected to attend the Psychic Battle event this summer; this ticket will allow you to attend a national convention with other Psychic Battle enthusiasts. There

will be a plethora of prizes. We hope to see you there! - Junhyuk Kang, Psychic Battle's main director.”

“A ticket to an event!? Woah...”

As the male student let out a cry of joy, the envious gazes of everyone in the store shifted to him.

At that moment, one man took out his wallet and spoke to the student.

“Hey there. Do you have any thoughts on selling that ticket to me? I'll offer you 10,000 Yen. How about it?”

“No thank you.”

He declined the offer instantly.

Of course, the price of the ticket would increase exponentially over the course of a few weeks, so refusing 100 Yens was the wise choice.

One month passed by like this. Predictably enough, there were signs that read ‘Psychic Battle sold out. We are taking in pre-order requests.’ in front of the entrance of various stores. Players must have inquired these stores to the point of interrupting their businesses. And a moment later. An incredulous situation unfolded in front of me.

-I'm buying Psychic Battle cartridges at a premium price-

Various buyers were pitching to buy Psychic Battle cartridges next to the Akihabara station. I predicted that something like this would happen sooner or later, but to think it was happening so soon... After weeks of searching all over the market for a Psychic Battle cartridge, this was their only hope of acquiring a copy. But the more surprising was, the number of these 'pitchers' were slowly growing.

"This really is... I've never seen anything like this in my life. These people are desperate enough to come out here and pitch to random people in hopes of buying a Psychic Battle cartridge." Mr. Shige muttered as he stepped out of the smoking area after smoking a joint.

"The release event is approaching soon, and they must be anguished when they can't buy something even if they have the money. This idea will be tormenting their heads when they're at home... Hence why these people are out here trying to acquire a copy to play for themselves, no matter how small the chances are."

"Hoh~ Why didn't you release more cartridges if you're pitying these people."

"I'll be marketing Psychic Battle with pre orders from this point on."

"Pre order? What's that?"

“It’s a process where customers would pay upfront to reserve a spot for the next batch of stock. Since Psychic Battle cartridges require a specialty chip, we’ll have a headache if there are any leftovers. It’s obvious that people will continue to complain with the current situation; that’s why I told shop owners to take pre orders. After a month from now, most people who’d pre ordered a copy should be able to receive it.”

“Huph... You think they’ll be able to wait for a month? This... is truly a blood-draining strategy.”

I grinned slightly in acknowledgement as I led Mr. Shige to the Dragon Warrior 3 event. It was at this moment. Mr. Shige who was following me suddenly stopped and spoke to me with a trembling voice.

“H-Hey, Junhyuk...”

“What is it?”

“Look... Look over there, next to the station...”

“What?”

I turned my head around and saw a huge poster board. And after reading the words on the poster, I doubted my eyes for a moment.

-Buying a Psychic Battle cartridge for 50,000 Yen. Golden tickets for 200,000 Yen.-

Holding up the poster was a person covering his face with a sunglass and a cough mask. But judging by the person's stature, it was obvious that he was a male highschooler who was offering an outrageous amount for Psychic Battle.

The poor kid was looking at the ground and avoiding people's gazes as he was holding up his sign.

"He's young. What has this world gone to..."

Mr. Shige clicked his tongue as he looked at the boy holding the poster. However, I was able to figure out exactly who the kid was.

"Ex...excuse me, Mr. Shige. I need to go to the bathroom..."

I sprinted to a nearby public bathroom and hurriedly took out my Game & Watch. I searched up one individual.

'Saki Masahiro.'

A flood of information about Janice, a famous Japanese celebrity appeared on the Game & Watch display. And I selected the date February 10th, 1988.

"I was right."

---

## Dragon Warrior 3.

It was a title that swept the nation with 380,000 sales and was hailed as one of the Family console's top games for a year.

When I was a kid, I was lucky enough to purchase Dragon Warrior 3 as well, which was sold out in a majority of stores, much like the current situation with Psychic Battle. I'd experienced a unique set of fun while playing the game knowing I had what many others immensely desired.

As Mr. Shige and I stepped into the event place, we were greeted with the scene of a bumbling crowd. Models of the purple slime, an iconic mascot of the Dragon Warriors series, were situated in various locations throughout the event. And the statue of the 'Prince's Sword' was set in the middle of the event.

"Whistle~ Fancy."

"The Dragon Warrior series is an RPG loved by entire nation after all. This kind of setup should be expected."

Which would also add to the imagination of the players...

As I was leaving the store after purchasing a Dragon Warrior 3 cartridge, a familiar scene occurred as I met eye to eye with a

women.

“Ah! You’re the guy from!!”

She blitzed over to me with a mike in her hand as soon as she spotted me. Mr. Shige who was besides me recognized her face as he spoke to me.

“Isn’t she the reporter from this morning?”

“Yep. Ms. Kachuragi Masato.”

“Oh~ You remembered her name?”

That’ was... How could I not remember her name after my interview with her...

She came up to me with a disapproving look as I awkwardly smiled at her and asked.

“You said you weren’t going to buy a Dragon Warrior cartridge but we’re seeing each other again.”

She was obviously irritated from what I did in our interview. I stared directly at her current self and smiled as I opened my mouth.



“You seem to be upset from our interview earlier.”

“Who..Who said I was upset.”

“Oh? You’re not upset? I wanted to give you a piece of breaking news as an apology...”

“Breaking news? Oh!? What is it!!”

Funnily enough, people working in the news industry all showed the same reaction in response to a breaking news happening. Seeing how she came all the way to Akihabara because of a game release event, there was a very high possibility of her being an intern at the broadcasting station like Yuki. Ms. Masato seemed to be a bit older than Yuki as well, being around the same age as me.

“Why are you staring at me like that? Please tell me what the breaking news is.”

“You sure are impatient. Then can I borrow your ears for a moment?”

“What?”

“I’m telling you; it’s breaking news. We don’t want this information to leak, do we?”

“Okay...If you say anything weird again, I won’t let you off!”

Misato wore an irritated expression as she leaned her ears to me. As I neared her, Misato seemed to be tickled as her petite shoulders twitched ever so slightly.

“Sakai Masahiro is currently in Akihabara.”

“What...?”

“I said Sakai Masahiro is currently in Akihabara.”

“What are you saying. Why would Sakai-kun be...”

“I’m telling you the truth. I saw him.”

“Rea...lly? Sakai-kun really is in Akiba?”

“Yes. He’s probably standing next to the train station holding a poster board right now.”

The moment I finished my sentence, Misato grabbed the camera who was taking pictures of the interior and disappeared like the wind.”

Her determination can’t be questioned, haha.

Sakai Masahiro was the leader of the idol group, SMEP. They

were composed of teen stars who were professionally cultivated by the entertainment company Janice, who was known for taking in middle to high school kids and debuting them as idols.

And the leader of that SMEP was holding a poster next to a train station right now.

As a game enthusiast, Sakai had been an avid fan of the Dragon Warrior series. That must have been the reason why he sneaked out to come to Akihabara. His original plan was to buy the newly released Dragon Warrior 3 and return, but the sudden announcement of Psychic Battle's release along with not being able to buy its cartridge caused him to hold up a sign next to the station like that...

Psychic Battle, a game that the popular idol group leader, Sakai Masahiro, wanted so much, he held a poster board next to a train station to buy it from a pedestrian...

This story might make the 9PM news if I'm lucky. This could potentially be a game-changing free advertisement for Psychic Battle!!

## Chapter 55 :

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“The leader of the idol group SMEP, Sakai Miharo, has disregarded his performance schedule and is currently standing next to the Akihabara station offering an extremely high price for a particular game cartridge. The game he is looking for is called Psychic Battle, an action game selling for 6980, yet he is holding up a poster board offering 50,000 yen for a copy. Reporter Kachurai Misato is in the location and will investigate this exact situation.”

As I was coming out from a shower, Mr. Shige who was drinking a can of beer from the motel was staring at the news with a blank expression. On the screen was Ms. Misato who was relentlessly interviewing Sakai while shouting his name.

“Sakai-kun? You’re Sakai Masahiro-kun from SMEP, right? Please answer me!!”

Wow, Ms. Misato is incredible. She was successful in revealing his true identity after running after Sakai-kun who had abandoned his disguise and ran off. And she was also successful in scoring an interview with him until his manager would arrive.

“I haven’t had time to play video games because of my broadcasting schedule, but I really wanted to buy a copy of Psychic Battle.”

Because Sakai-kun had offered 50,000 for a copy of Psychic Battle and an astronomical 200,000 for the golden ticket, the news station broadcasted my morning interview with Ms. Misato right

after a footage of Sakai-kun holding up his poster as additional info. She was berating me for shameless advertisement, yet they still showed my full interview without any edits?

Mr. Shige who had been watching the news stared at me with a disbelieving look before asking me a question.

“So the “crazy bastard” that we saw next to the station was Sakai-kun?”

“You didn’t know? I recognized him instantly. He was covering his face up because he was a celebrity.”

“Ah, I should’ve asked for an autograph.”

“What will you do with a teen idol’s autograph?”

“Uh? I can exchange it for a female celebrity’s autograph later...”

He...He’s a genius?

As I was admiring Mr. Shige’s extraordinary ratiocination, the telephone rang in the motel.

-Riinnnng, Rinnnng~

“Who could it be at this hour?”

I tilted my sideways and picked up the receiver, and a thunderous laughter greeted me.

“Is this Kang-kun!? Yahahahaha~!! I’m Yamauchi! Are you watching the news right now?”

“Of course, Mr. Shige and I are watching it together. President Yamauchi, you’ve drank at least a bottle, right?”

“Indeed I did~!! Why would I not drink on a day like this~!!”

“We’re drinking canned beer in our motel as well, haha.”

“What!? Canned beer? Hey!! Go out and drink expensive alcohol immediately ; and send me the receipt!!”

“I’m fine. Mr. Shige and I are exhausted after walking all day, so we want to rest now. We have to head back to the HQ tomorrow too. By the way, you sure are ecstatic. Is it because of the news?”

“Hey!! Your pre-order idea or whatever is causing our entire nation to throw their money at us.”

“Ah... so the orders are coming in already? How many came in so far?”

“10,000 orders, just from today. But the number isn’t showing

any signs of slowing down, you lovely bastard!”

Hoh... 10,000 orders on the first day!? I thought it would be 3~4,000 orders at the most; it's higher than I expected. Could this all be due to Ms. Misato's quick actions?

“Anyways, my lovely bastard, you've stumbled upon a tremendous lucky chance.”

“President Yamauchi, do you really think this is all because of luck?”

“What? What are you saying.”

“There was a slight bit of lucky factor involved, but I was the one who informed the reporter about Sakai-kun.”

“What!? Really? Then you...”

“Meeting the news reporter and Sakai-kun was definitely a coincidence, but following that; arranging for them to meet was my doing.”

“You really.. Are...”

“Since it came to this President Yamauchi, let's use Sakai-kun again.”

“How?”

“He’s the leader of a fast-growing idol group; let’s give the SMEP members our golden tickets for free.”

“Hum... And then?”

“What do you think Sakai-kun will do when he receives a Psychic Battle cartridge and golden ticket that he coveted.”

“You’re not planning...”

“That’s right. The SMEP members will come to our summer Psychic Battle event. Even if they didn’t come, the point where we hand over our gifts to them will be plenty of advertising already.”

“Right. You’re absolutely right. Go ahead and do that.”

“Then I’ll stop by the Janice Entertainment office before heading back to the HQ.”

“Alright, rest well. Tell Shige he did an excellent job too.”

“Yes, sir.”

---



The next day.

Mr. Shige and I visited the Janice office and handed the Psychic Battle cartridges and the golden ticket to the SMEP members after barely convincing their manager to meet with them.

As expected, Sakai-kun was incredibly happy at our surprise gifts. Of course, his manager had refused us from meeting the SMEP members at first, but after I explained the benefits of receiving these gifts, he nodded his head and let us in.

And my prediction was right on the money.

After the incident was featured on the news, even people who were not familiar with the video game culture recognized the name Psychic Battle. Moreover, Sakai-kun was able to plea for forgiveness from his management company and the issue was settled.

However, Sakai's actions from that day would come up time and time again in the future during good-humored conversations. Sakai's reckless actions where he ditched a live broadcast to buy a video game in Akihabara would be remembered as a legend in the entertainment world.

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The sales of Psychic Battle cartridges were going smoothly after it's initial launch. In particular, due to Chandra's efficient reorganization of the code in the official cartridge, various articles

were madly raving about the game's graphics. Amidst the frenzied responses of the people who'd been able to buy the cartridge, keeping up with the ever-growing demand was still an issue. Despite the expensive price of Psychic Battle's cartridge, Pre-ordering was proving to be a massive success to which President Yamauchi expressed extreme euphoria.

But where there were smiling people, it was inevitable that some would find dissatisfaction...

“Hey, I’m not joking anymore. Hand over the cheat key already.”

“Even the great Junpei is throwing the towel in?”

“Hey~ You lunatic, there should be a way to beat the game!! Is beating this game even possible?”

“Of course. That’s why there is an option to play the boss characters after you beat the game.”

“Arghhh!! Who could ever be as cruel as you. I wanted to play Ryu Hwa-ryung!!!!”

Ryu Hwa-ryung. As the final boss of Psychic Battle, she had garnered the most popularity amongst Psychic Battle players; yet she had been deemed as almost impossible to beat because of her scamming cheat skills.

The ability to teleport, telekinesis, a barrier that reflected all

enemy attacks, and shooting laser beams that filled the entire screen.

And most notably, or with the most notoriety, her ability to instantly kill a character with an energy-imbued kick had garnered much attention amongst players.

“Has there been any news of someone who cleared the game yet?”

“I’ve only seen proposals from players requesting strategies to beat the game? That’s why you have to give us the code now!! Do you want to see me getting eaten alive by our readers, huh?”

This is a disappointment. I expected at least one or two dedicated players to clear the game. I swallowed a grin and tried appealing to Junpei.

“Ok, ok. I’ll give you a hint instead.”

“Really? What is it?”

“It’s not possible to win in during the early Ryu Hwa-ryung stages.

“What!?”

“You have to survive no matter what. Do not attack recklessly for

the first 10 minutes and try to preserve as much health as possible. Then you'll understand what I'm saying."

"Hmm... does a new scene result from that?"

This is why perceptive reporters are a pain...

"Yeah. Just try your best to make it to that point."

"You devil... Okay. I'll contact you again after I clear the game."

Junpei hung up the phone without asking about the new scene again. He must've wanted to confirm what it was by himself.

Video games during the 80s and 90s were... truly unkind.

After the 2000s, Games had well-developed tutorials that explained what each button did, and marked exactly where to go on the map. But the games of this era simply did not make gaming easy for players. There was an unspoken belief amongst game developers that players would find beating the game on their own without any outside help that much more refreshing.

Anyways, what would happen when one was able to hold out for 10 minutes on the Ryu Hwa-rang stage?

An event where the two other main characters aside from the current character would appear as reinforcements. During the

initial development stages, this scenario was impossible to support with the current hardware; however, Chandra's coding skills made it possible.

Morita who had developed Psychic Battle with me, had cried tears of joy when we completed the debugging and saw the scenario play out for the first time.

As the development of Psychic Battle, one of the biggest projects that I'd ever undertaken was finished, Morita and Hayashi who had been on the development team each returned to their respective departments again.

On one day...

After I finished my lunch and was heading back to my office, I chanced upon Morita who was staring out the window with a vacant look in the staff-recreation room.

"Mr. Morita?"

"Ah... Director Kang. Hello."

"Why are you in the recreation room at this hour? Have you eaten yet?"

"No, I didn't have much of an appetite..."

Morita and I shared a weak laugh as he brought a can of coffee from the vending machine to his lips. I stepped into the recreation room and pushed coins into the vending machine as I asked Morita.

“How is it going nowadays? Is your department treating you well?”

In response, Morita shook his head side-to-side and replied.

“Working with you was the best. Our department is planning out a new project, but I don’t think it’s my style after all. Our new game is set on releasing exclusively for the mobile Gamboy...”

The mobile Gamboy... It was unsuitable for Morita who liked to see graphic images of beautiful girls on the screen. His skills were on the precipice in regards to designing beautiful girls, but it was limited to that only. As Mintendo tended to focus our game themes around cute characters instead of sexy or beautiful ones, Morita took great delight in designing the sexy characters of Psychic Battle. He even took the character’s body designs a little too far during the initial design mockups that I had to hold him back.

“We’re still in the middle of discussing our plans right now, but it’s highly likely that we’ll be diving into developing an exclusive Donkey Kom game for the Gamboy”

Oh oh... Psychic Battle’s revered number one graphic designer was tasked with drawing mere plants... Does this make any sense?

## Chapter 56 :

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“This really is... I can't really help you here either...”

“Director Kang, do you have any plans on making Psychic Battle 2?”

“Psychic Battle 2? I do have plans on making it, but... It's not going to be for the Family console. I'm thinking about developing it after the next generation of consoles are released.”

“Ha... That would take at least several years from now.”

“Right? Haha...”

“I held a pen this morning for a brief moment, yet I had no desire to draw at all. My hands were on fire when I was drawing Ryu Hwa-ryung and Azesha Ren... Anyways, our team manager called me out for doing nothing today.”

He was producing 4~5 high quality illustrations per day when he was working on Psychic Battle; his preference really is making a huge impact on his job performance...

“Is Mr. Hayashi doing well these days?”

“Last I heard, he was transferred to the Inventions Office 1 to work on making the final touches on Super Marigee 3...”

At that moment, a disheveled-looking Hayashi opened the door to the recreation room and entered.

I waved my hands at the sight of a familiar face, but he didn't see us and shoved a cigarette into his mouth as soon as he walked in.

“Mr. Hayashi?”

“Ah!? Director Kang!!”

“How have you been?”

“That's... Phew... It's nothing.”

I could guess what he's going through.

Hayashi's personality wasn't a match with the Inventions No.1 team. He sucked a huge breath of smoke in and sighed before speaking to me.

“Director Kang, do you have any plans on making Psychic Battle 2?”

... Did these two plan something out beforehand... What's happening here?



“You’re thinking the same thing as me, Hayashi. Director Kang!! Please save us!! I want to design beautiful girls. I’d rather look for another job than be drawing Donkey Kim.”

“I also can’t work with the Inventions No.1 team. Just this morning, I discovered a few bugs in the software we were working on, so I gave a few words of advice to the developers. And they treated me like an idiot. Mr. Shige should’ve forced them to fix it and yell at them for being careless, but that’s not his personality...It was much more peaceful when I was working under you; I was learning a lot too.”

As expected, my predictions were right. Hayashi’s personality didn’t match the atmosphere of the Inventions No. 1 team... I took a sip from my cup of coffee and turned my head back and forth between Morita and Hayashi.

A graphic designer specializing in drawing females, and a coding machine... This combination could work...

I stared at them for a moment and opened my mouth.

“Mr. Morita and Mr. Hayashi, I understand how you feel right now. However, I don’t have plans on developing Psychic Battle 2 anytime soon...”

“Oh...”

“Phew...”

In response to my reply, the two made a dejected face as they sighed.

“So I was thinking, How about this?”

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A few days later, I brought along Morita and Hayashi to Pentagon Soft in Tokyo.

“Director Kang? Where are we?”

“This is the company that developed Final Frontier.”

“Okay, but why are we here...”

“Mmm... Pentagon Soft is currently led by Mr. Kawaguchi, the main developer of Final Frontier, and he wanted to meet you guys after I mentioned my Psychic Battle team members.”

“Whaat?”

Cluck. As we entered through the door, we saw the clean interior of the game development office. Hayashi’s first impression of the interior was favorable.

“W...Wow.”

He couldn't stand mess at all; Hayashi was the type of person who couldn't sleep at night if I misplaced a book on his work desk. Seeing such a clean working environment, I could understand Hayashi's enthusiasm.

At that moment, Mr. Kawaguchi, who had been having a conversation with Yamano Yoshitaka, a game script writer, greeted me.

“Welcome, Mr. Junhyuk.”

Subsequently, Morita who was standing next to me shouted out in excitement.

“P...Professor Yamano!!”

“Oh~ Long time no see, Morita!!”

Mmm? Did they know each other? As soon as Morita spotted Mr. Yamano, he ran up to him and spoke as he grasped Mr. Yamano's hands tightly.

“I'm working as a character designer now, just like you said I would.”

“Yes, I was aware of that. The moment I saw Psychic Battle's graphics, I had the feeling it was your work. Your touch is still

alive!!”

Hoh.... So Mr. Yamano was Morita’s teacher? This was unexpected...

From their conversation, it seemed that Morita was Mr. Yamano’s part-time worker when he was in high school. Mr. Yamano had recognized Morita’s talent in drawing out a unique story using the curvatures of the female body and directed him to pursue a career in character design. But there was another surprising piece of information here.

“Do you know how Satoshi-kun is doing these days?”

“Last I heard, while he was working for a magazine publisher as an illustrator, he was scouted by a company making console games named... Dasaia? Anyways, he’s working at that company now.”

Dasaia... Could it be that Dasaia who was famous for the game Sermon Guritsa!? Then this Satoshi is...?

Not being able to wait any longer, I stepped into their conversation.

“Mr. Morita, could you perhaps be talking about Yoshihara Satoshi?”

“Oh? You knew him as well, Director Kang?”

“Ah, I don’t know him personally... But I saw one of his illustrations once...”

“He is also talented in bringing female characters to life on the screen. Haha, I knew you were very perceptive when you recognized my talent, but you were familiar with the beauty of female illustrations all along.”

Haha... I knew this industry was small but to think practically everyone knew each other like next door neighbors... Yoshihara Satoshi... No offense to Morita, but Satoshi possessed an almost god-like sense in drawing female illustrations.

In later days, he would garner international recognition as an illustrator with his project, Sermon Guritsa. So this was the reason I sometimes felt Satoshi’s influence in Morita’s projects; they were old classmates...

A while later, I introduced Hayashi and Morita to Mr. Kawaguchi. As Mr. Kawaguchi was short on human resources for finalizing the development of Final Frontier, he expressed great delight with Hayashi’s coding ability.

“You write code very elegantly. We also like to write in plugs to document my code; our programmers here at Pentagon Soft all follow this structure.”

As expected, Hayashi and Mr. Kawaguchi hit it off quite well. Hayashi also had experience playing Kawaguchi’s Final Frontier,

so they were in the middle of exchanging compliments with each other. And Morita was happily catching up with his old teacher.

Meanwhile, I sat at a nearby and looked around the interior of Pentago Soft as I sipped on a coffee that an employee brought to me.

I was given access to the inventions office and the employee rest area in the second floor of Pentagon soft as I had partook in the success of Final Frontier. The inventions office was originally split into 2 teams, but only one team was currently active while they were trying to put the finishing touches on Final Frontier 2.

1988 was the year of various famous games being released. And as brands like Dragon Warrior, Super Marigee and Final Frontier were among the most recognized games, plans were being made to continue these series.

Along with the success of these various titles for Mintendo, President Yamauchi had also been unable to let go of the sentiment that games were little more than money factories for him.

“I won’t give Mintendo another game from this point on...”

I had no intention of develop games under Mintendo anymore. Psychic Battle would probably be my last gift to Mintendo.

Making a game required many hours of hard work and effort, but the company that distributes these games would slap their logo on

it and buy the copyrights for the penny that they were worth. This was a great downside to the original developers of the game; they couldn't produce for that series if they moved to another company. Unless one had the intention of living and dying with their first company like Mr. Shige, continuously making games for one company would negatively affect a developer's career.

‘If Morita and Hayashi agrees to settle down here, I will be releasing my next game with this company.’

There were various genres that I could relate to when I envisioned Morita's designing style, such as the once famous ‘Grow the Princess’ game where one would raise their ‘daughter’ from childhood to marriage, etc...

‘No. Even though I have countless memories of famous masterpiece games in my head, I won't copy from them.’

Up until now, when I was making Dragon Emblem and Psychic Battle, I had not copied the originals. Even if I was leading the industry with these new genres, I knew I had my morals to preserve.

I took out a marker and started writing on the whiteboard in the inventions office.

First things first, the genre. From what I knew, the first adult game was developed in the 90s for the computer, which was a dating simulator. It was created by Fox Soft called ‘Thumping Memorial’, featuring the main character who would choose a girl

to pursue and try to woo her in 3 years with various events.

Other than that, there were a few others such as ‘Sentimental Graffiti’, ‘Piacarot’, etc... There should be a few others, but this will do for now...

I was lost in thought while writing on the whiteboard.

Well, the general storyline of these types of games were like this: the main character would do a plethora of kind acts to every girl he met. Every once in awhile, there would be an event where he could gain points towards “wooing” the girl.

As I had never properly dated anyone prior to travelling to 83’, I had no intentions of making the main character be happy that easily.

“Should I take this in the other direction then?”

There are a lot of “living happily ever after” stories, but there aren’t any about preparing for a divorce. Oh? The more I think about it, it seems to be a good idea...?

A young man who is preparing to break up with his girlfriend... a breakup... simulation... At that moment, a scenario started to play itself in my head.



## Chapter 57 :

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After contemplating on my thoughts for a while, I returned to the inventions office to beckon Mr. Kawaguchi to the restroom for a conversation.

“What do you think about those two, Mr. Kawaguchi?”

“I’m excited about them. Our Mr. Yamano already acknowledges Mr. Morita as a character designer, and talks are also going well with Mr. Hayashi. As they’re both from a leading game company, we’ve learned a few things from them too.”

“Right? They’re talents that I worked with on developing Psychic Battle, so I can guarantee their skills. But...”

“Is there a problem?”

“We’re worried about the current direction that Mintendo is taking. Mr. Morita possesses incredible talent for designing, but his specialty is in drawing female characters, while Mr. Hayashi could be considered one of the top game developers in Japan, but he lacks interpersonal skills when working in a group. His personality could be described as saying only what needs to be said?”

“Ah~ I think I understand what you’re saying.”

“This is why I wanted to hear your opinion first, Mr. Kawaguchi.

Frankly speaking, what do you think about taking those two in?”

“What?”

“They’re rare talents that would go to waste if they stay in Mintendo. The current Mintendo has a countless number of character designers and game developers. Their true value would never be fully utilized. In Mr. Morita’s case, he would be transferred to work on the next Donkey Kom title in one month’s time.”

“Assigning a character designer who was endorsed by Mr. Yamano to a game like Donkey Kom? That doesn’t seem right...”

“Your thoughts are on the same plane as mine, Mr. Kawaguchi.”

“We really do need any help that we can get to finalize the finishing touches on Final Frontier...”

“Then this really is the perfect opportunity for both parties...”

“I would welcome them with open arms if they want to come into our Pentagon. The only problem is adding more members to the team without consulting our President who is away at the moment...”

“You can register their employee contracts through a lawyer like before. I don’t think you need to worry about their salaries with the impending launch of Final Frontier 2.”

“Mmm... Alright. But first, we should hear their opinions too. Will they be satisfied by moving to our Pentagon Soft from a conglomerate like Mintendo?”

“I’ll speak to them about this privately. When you return to the inventions office, can you call Mr. Hayashi and Mr. Morita here please?”

“Sure thing.”

In response to my words, Mr. Kawaguchi left for the inventions office with a nod. And a brief moment later. Mr. Morita and Mr. Hayashi walked into the restroom together.

“You were here Director Kang. We didn’t see you for a long time, so we thought you left us here.”

“Haha, how could I. Anyways, how did you guys find Pentagon Soft?”

Morita pulled his thumb and replied.

“I think it’s wonderful here. I had a great time meeting Professor Yamano again, and everyone seemed nice. Even though it’s a small company, there is a sense of camaraderie that can’t be found in Mintendo.”

That's... You must've felt that because you met your old teacher here. I nodded in response to Morita before asking Hayashi."

"What about you, Mr. Hayashi?"

In response to my question, Hayashi hoisted his glasses up and paused for a moment before speaking.

"There doesn't seem to be any useless bantering going on while working. Mr. Kawaguchi seems to be a good mood setter, and the work environment seems to be organized so I think I can focus on working at my job without any distractions."

"That... so you're saying you like Pentagon Soft?"

"To put it bluntly, yes."

"Great! I talked with Mr. Kawaguchi a while ago, and he wanted to have both of you on his team as well. However, unlike Mintendo, Pentagon Soft is a small company. Their most successful project to date is the Final Frontier series."

In response to this piece of information, Morita asked me a question with a bewildered expression.

"Could... you be asking us to leave Mintendo for Pentagon, Director Kang?"

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“But this is a little...”

It’s not like I couldn’t understand their reactions, as it wasn’t common at all for employees working at the same company to ask each other to move to another company. Especially for moving from a company in Kyoto to the Pentagon Soft in Tokyo, they had to find a new place to stay amongst other issues... But since they weren’t married yet, moving their residencies didn’t seem to be a huge problem.

Like Mintendo, Pentagon Soft also paid for half the rent for their employee’s apartment. All that was left was their decision. At that moment, Morita slowly opened his mouth and spoke with his uniquely slow way of speaking.

“I’ll...move.”

“H, Hey... Morita.. You...”

“I’ve been thinking about this from a while back actually. I can’t create designs for Mintendo which suits my tastes. Mintendo was a hard company to get into, but the kind of work that came my way were all things like designing unimportant items and background scenes. But I’d always hoped for my moment to shine. However, my co-workers had made fun of me for drawing “perverted” girls; I almost contemplated on quitting. During that period, you asked me to work on Psychic Battle, and I was thrilled, Director Kang. I finally felt like someone recognized my talent. Working on the

characters for Psychic Battle last year was when I was the happiest in all my four years of working at Mintendo. I thought new doors would open for me after working on Psychic Battle, but alas... I was back to right where I was before.”

“The characters that you create are absolutely fantastic, Mr. Morita. I consider a large portion of Psychic Battle’s success to your work.”

“Thank you, Director. After working on Psychic Battle, I felt that I wanted to be able to draw what my passion was regardless of anything else. Since my teacher, Professor Yamano, is also working in Pentagon, I’ve made up my mind about applying to work here.”

Good... I secured an extremely talented character designer. Now how should I approach bringing this stubborn coding machine over to my side? Unlike Morita, Hayashi was well respected for his coding skill at Mintendo so it must have been hard for him to make a decision to move to another company.

“Mr. Morita decided to work here... What about you, Mr. Hayashi?”

“I think I’ll have to think about this for a moment.”

“That’s fair enough. Taking your time in thinking and let me know what your decision is. Although Pentagon is a smaller company compared to Mintendo, the salary should be similar. And since you’re coming over from Mintendo, you will be treated quite well. On top of that, there currently is an empty inventions office

in Pentagon, Mr. Hayashi.”

“There is an empty inventions office?”

“With your skills, you should be able to become a team leader for the next software project.”

“Me... team leader?”

Okay. He’s wavering. Just a little more would do...

Hayashi had a calm and collected personality, but this didn’t mean he didn’t have any ambition. With Hayashi having trouble working with his co-workers, his talent could be best utilized by assigning him to work on a project by himself. Or, having him take on a managerial position to assign tasks to his team members could work out too. Of course... I’d feel a little sorry for the people in his team. Well, Hayashi shouldn’t bother them too much if they complete their tasks...

“But even if we move now, wouldn’t it would be difficult for us to help with Final Frontier, a game we’ve never worked on?”

“Don’t worry about that. You two will be assigned to a completely new project as soon as you arrive.”

“A new project for Pentagon Soft?”

“Mmm... the name of the project isn’t decided yet, anyways...”

I paused for a moment before continuing.

“Do you guys... have any experience in dating?”

Ensuingly, both Morita and Hayashi became mutes. Phew... I couldn’t speak for them, but looking at them reminded me of myself before I arrived here.

“I’m planning on revolving my next game around dating and relationships. Unlike the previous games we’ve worked on so far, there will be an extra emphasis on the story line which would also require a corresponding amount of hard work to be put in.”

At that moment, Morita yelled out after processing the word “Dating”.

“A dating game would definitely need female characters!!”

“We wouldn’t simply need them, they will be the main characters. This game would simulate dating in real life for the players. If I had to assign this a genre, I would put it under “Dating Simulation”.

“D..Dating simulation...? What kind of a name is that...?”

As the types of genres up until now had been titles like action,



role-playing, adventure, shooting, etc... This new type of simulation could feel incredibly awkward for them.

But from the era I'm from, there is even a genre called "Hit 'n Run".

Could you ever possibly imagine this? The genre "Hit 'n Run"...

I also couldn't believe my eyes the first time I saw that name...

"Director Kang, I'm also in favor of this dating simulation theme. The point is that the characters I would create will be dating each other within the game, right?"

"You don't have to hurry, haha. I'll develop the storyline along with how you design the characters."

"My hands are itching to draw just by listening to you."

Now now... As expected, Morita was completely set on fire. But the important point to keep in mind was, the graphics couldn't be too revealing as there were female players like Yuki who would prefer to enjoy the game with a peaceful mind.

Before long, Hayashi who had been listening to our conversation spoke up.

"I.. will have to think for a bit."

Hayashi was probably trying to scrutinize this decision carefully. I believe he would become an invaluable asset to Pentagon, but the question was whether or not he would make the move...

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“Then we’ll get going now.”

“Alright, well it was nice meeting you, Mr. Morita and Mr. Hayashi.”

Mr. Kawaguchi shook both Morita and Hayashi’s hands and smiled warmly towards them. It was obvious that Kawaguchi was in love with the idea of hiring these two.

“I’ve already decided to quit Mintendo and work here. I will be submitting my resignation letter as soon as I arrive in Kyoto.”

“We would be delighted to have Mr. Yamano’s old student work here, Mr. Morita. Psychic Battle was a technically intricate masterpiece, but your character illustrations have multiplied the enjoyability of the game. Some of our employees are your fans~”

That was right.

If Psychic Battle had macho male characters whose armor came off every time they took damage instead of the current female characters, I could guarantee that the sales would be down by more

than 50%.

Attracting male gamers with female characters was the way to go.

“And coding that intricate projectile battle system was also never seen before, Mr. Hayashi. Our company is currently lacking in programmers, so I do hope you think of us in a positive light when you’re making your decision.”

As Mr. Kawaguchi said his farewells with a bow, Hayashi followed suit and bowed in return with a bumbling face.

Hayashi seemed to be pleasantly surprised that a leader like Kawaguchi would bow to him first.

Returning to the Shinjuku station went smoothly as we snagged a ride on Pentagon’s company car.

“I’ve discovered a new door in life thanks to you, Director Kang.”

---

On the return trip, Hayashi was alternating between a smile and a frown; it seemed that he was finally starting to see the light in moving to Pentagon Soft.

At that moment, a voice called out to me from behind me.

“Mr. Junhyuk~!!”

# Chapter 58 :

---

“Oh? Miss... Yuki.”

As I added ‘Miss’ in front of Yuki’s name, she crumpled her nose and frowned.

“I told you to just call me Yuki.”

“Sorry, I’m still getting used to calling you by your name. Anyways, I didn’t expect you to arrive so soon. It’s an hour before our appointment.”

“I came here early because I had a few things to buy, but I had no idea that you’d be here. Who are the people behind you anyways...?”

“Ah, these are my colleagues. Mr. Morita and Mr. Hayashi.”

“Hello, I’m Yuki Ishikawa. Nice to meet you two!”

“Ah... that.. Urhm...”

Seeing Morita and Hayashi’s response to a girl in front of them, it clearly proved that they had zero experience in dating. I seriously questioned if I could develop a dating game with these two.

“I’m Morita Shinpei.”

“Hayashi Yosuke.”

“Please take care of me, Mr. Morita and Mr. Hayashi~”

At the sight of the brightly smiling Yuki with her dancing eyes, Morita and Hayashi froze up on the spot.

“Since we’re all here, should we have dinner together even though it’s a bit early?”

“Woo~ I’m all up for it.”

“Us too? Aren’t you guys... urhm, whatchumacallit, on a date?”

I planned to meet up with Yuki since I was in Tokyo, but I didn’t think our meeting would unfold like this. But Yuki didn’t seem to mind, and having dinner with colleagues once in awhile wasn’t bad either...

“I wanted to buy you guys a meal before leaving to Kyoto tomorrow anyways. Yuki, are you okay with this?”

“Yes, I’m all for it.”

As we haven’t had a date in a while, Yuki who had put in extra care to wear an appealing red dress attracted the gazes of the passerby's.

“Are there any good specialty restaurants around the Shinjuku area?”

Regarding specialty restaurants, it was better to ask her directly rather than eating at a random restaurant. In response, Yuki took out her notebook and started looking through her notes for the Shinjuku area.

“There are quite a few shops. What type of food do you guys prefer?”

Acting with class, Yuki asked the question towards Morita and Hayashi first. If she was only talking to me, they would feel discomfort so it was her way of making them feel comfortable.

“I... We’re fine with anything.”

“Mmm~ It’ll be for the best to tell me what kind of foods you like. Here, do you prefer traditional Japanese cuisine? Or maybe a Western cuisine?”

Hayashi responded by choosing from her two options.

“Then we’ll go with the Japanese...”

“Rice or noodles?”

This time, Morita replied.

“A rice dish would probably be better than noodles since we’re eating dinner.”

“Alright. Mr. Junhyuk, would you prefer a traditional meal or a hot pot?”

“Mmm... hot pot.”

“Okay~ everyone follow me.”

She’s something else. Everyone should be satisfied... At that moment, Morita who was following behind me said. “I think I understand how this “dating simulation” will work.”

“R..Really?”

That’s a relief. Moments later, we followed Yuki into a shabu-shabu restaurant. She had navigated through the busy alleyways of Shinjuku to easily arrive at our location. The restaurant was located in an obscure location where I would be hard pressed to find even with a GPS, but Yuki managed to quickly find her way by referring to her notes and asking people for directions.

Even after sitting down in the restaurant, she sat next to me and started talking so Morita and Hayashi wouldn’t feel awkward.



“By the way~ the event ended, but you didn’t forget to give me a copy of Dragon Emblem, did you, Mr. Junhyuk?”

“So you like video games as well, Ms. Yuki.”

“Yes~ I love them. I even bought Mintendo’s newest Psychic Battle.”

“Puhp!! Cough... cough. You bought Psychic Battle?”

“Mr. Junhyuk, how could you do this to me! You should’ve contacted me when you released Psychic Battle. Do you know how long I waited to buy a copy?”

“No, that’s... Khm...”

Psychic Battle was a game where even the slightest mistake in controlling would result in a piece of the character’s clothing being ripped off... Telling Yuki about this would be too much...

“It’s a bit erotic, but the characters were awesome. I was completely immersed into the game when I was playing earlier.”

“The characters were all designed by Mr. Morita, and Mr. Hayashi over here coded the battle system for the game.”

“Wow~ Then you three are the creators of Psychic Battle~!!”

“You can say that.”

“That’s incredible.”

Morita and Hayashi hurriedly were stirring their pot soup in embarrassment in response to Yuki’s genuine compliments.

“Ah~ May I scoop the soup for you?”

Yuki went on her knees and poured the contents of the pot into two small plates before handing the appetizing dish to Morita and Hayashi. Seeing her actions, Morita looked at me with envy in his eyes as he muttered.

“I can understand why you chose to create a dating simulation game, Director Kang.”

“Mr. Morita, that’s a misunderstanding.”

Subsequently, Yuki who had overheard our conversation asked while handing the plates over to them.

“Dating simulation? Is that a game??”

“It’s just an idea we’re discussing...”

“Wow~ It sounds really interesting?”

To Yuki who had an immense love for games, she showed immediate interest after the slightest talk about a game genre. As the topic of games came up, Morita and Hayashi had also abandoned everything they were doing before and engaged in a heated conversation with Yuki.

“What do you think incorporating AI to influence the actions of the ‘girlfriend’ in the game depending on the player's’ inputs?”

“That sounds like an amazing idea!!”

Yuki nodded vigorously as she agreed with Morita. However, Hayashi who was listening to the conversation made an exasperated expression as he opened his mouth.

“This so-called AI would be no different from having alternate endings in an adventure role-playing game. Even if the player could make certain choices within the game, in the end, the ending scenario would show a predestined ending.”

With Hayashi’s cold response completely disregarding all hopes and dreams, Yuki and Morita turned silent as if they had been doused with cold water.

“Mr. Hayashi... that was scary.”

“I’m just pointing out the facts.”

I let out a smirk after witnessing this quirky exchange. We finished our meal and stepped outside to find that the sky was already turning dark. Hayashi took a glance at his wristwatch and said his goodbyes.

“It’s almost time for my train to come, so I’ll get going then.”

“Alright, see you next week.”

“Director Kang, I’m grateful to you for everything you’ve done. It was nice meeting you too, Ms. Yuki. Hey~ Morita, let’s hurry. We’re going to be late.”

“Wait...”

Hmm?

Morita had always been the one to agree with Hayashi. But today, he wanted to say something. He looked at Yuki and paused.

“Do you have something to say me?”

“Umm... If it’s alright with you, Ms. Yuki...”

“Me?”

As Morita nodded his head and pondered for a moment, Hayashi

turned impatient and urged Morita to speak.

“What is it? Spit it out, Morita. If we miss this train we’ll have to wait two more hours.”

Morita must’ve made up his mind as he spoke loudly with his teeth clenched.

“If it’s alright with you Ms. Yuki, could we reference you when we make our dating simulation game?”

... I thought Morita fell in love with Yuki at first sight and was going to ask her out or something. Yuki had also expected something along the lines of a confession, and after hearing him out, she relaxed her tensed-up shoulders before replying.

“Yes, I'm fine with that.”

“Thank you!!”

“But you have to make my character beautiful~”

“Of course~!!”

“... Morita, just hurry up. We have to run because of you~!!!”

“Okay... Haha.”

Yuki giggled at the sight of Hayashi grabbing Morita and disappearing like lightning.

“They’re funny, those two. I think they would work well with each other.”

“They do.”

“Mr. Morita said he was going to draw me as a character in the game, so I’m excited for that. But...”

Yuki blushed slightly before finishing her sentence.

“He can’t draw me like the characters in Psychic Battle... Well, I’ll trust you to take care of that, Junhyuk. He can’t reveal too much!”

“Alright, I’ll pass that on to him.”

“Ke~ Then should we go on a real date now that the intruders are gone?”

“Where do you want to go?”

“I wanted to see this movie for a while now. I don’t know if you’d like it though...”

“What’s the movie?”

“La Bamba...”

... That was a title I haven’t heard of in a long time.

---

La Bamba was based on the rock n’ roll star Ritchie Valens. The film depicts the effect of Valens’ career on the lives of his brother Bob Morales, his girlfriend, Donna Ludwig, and the rest of his family. After discovering his genius talent for music, he grew to become a star in Hollywood. Despite his girlfriend’s father opposing their relationship, he performed his own composition ‘La Bamba and Donna’ all over the country to stand at the apex of Rock n’ roll. However, in the last scene where he boarded a flight to go to his next concert, the plane crashed and tragically killed everyone on board.

Donna

Oh Donna, oh Donna, oh Donna oh Donna

I had a girl.

Donna was her name. Since you left me, I've never been the same.

'Cause I love my girl.

This was the song that the main character of the movie sung to his girlfriend Donna over the telephone and was very popular among ladies. Yuki was no exception.

"Oh~ Donna~ Oh~ Donna Oh~~ Donna~ Isn't Ritchie Valens so awesome? The ending was sad, but I had a blast watching the movie."

As we were walking out of the theater, Yuki commented as she hummed the tune from the film. I actually preferred 'We Belong Together', but I didn't say that aloud. The truth was that every song from La Bamba was a masterpiece.

Nonetheless, to think that I had actually watched this film right after it was released. This alone filled me with excitement; it was as if I had truly integrated with the culture of the 80s. On top of this, I had also gained a new idea from watching La Bamba...



‘Mmm... adding an alternate ending of having the male character die in my dating simulation game is something I should think about.’

The idea of one’s soulmate leaving this world would affect both men and women alike.

## Chapter 59 :

---

“What are you thinking about?”

“Hmm? Oh, I’m just thinking about different storylines for my dating simulation game.”

“Really... You should relax every now and then. How can you be focused on work like that all day?”

“Should I call myself... a workaholic? Well, something like that.”

“Mmm~ Then can help you with the storyline?”

“What?”

“For writing a game storyline... I can introduce you to a scenario writer I know very well.”

“A scenario writer?”

“Yes, he’s working as a screenwriter for a drama.”

Of course, she’s interning as an intern writer for a broadcasting station. She should be familiar with a few people from that industry. But... I never really felt engaged to any show on the few occasions I watched television...

Korean dramas were much better in terms of content. Or adapting the story line from the game ‘White Memory’ which was dubbed the “White Drug” by erotic game enthusiasts was another option...

Wait a second... Korean dramas?

A drama that I used to thoroughly enjoy before my time slip popped into my head. Yes... I think that plot will be excellent.

“Hello? Are you really leaving me hanging like this?”

“Sorry.”

“... I had high expectations for our date today...”

Yuki pretended to frown.

“I love you.”

“What? Ah... If you suddenly say it like that then...”

Yuki had turned into a red tomato in response to my casual remark. I think I confessed to her without really meaning to.

---

The next day.

I arrived at the Shinjuku station again and turned around to see a tearful Yuki. She would always see me off whenever it was time for me to return to Kyoto. ‘

“When are you planning to visit again?”

“Mmm... I don’t know. But I’m going to be away next week.”

“Then will I be able to see you the week after? Where are you going next week?”

“I’m going to be in Korea for a short visit.”

“Korea?”

“I’ll leave next Friday and return on Sunday.”

“Hmm... When is your flight leaving?”

“It’s the 2 P.M flight from Osaka. Well, since Korea is right next to us, the flight should take around an hour or so.”

“I’ve never traveled abroad in my life; I’m jealous.”

Yuki was immensely envious as well when I went on my business trip to America... I pictured her beaming face again after receiving the photos that I promised to take for her.

Since I had a bit of time left before my train, we sat down in a nearby coffee shop to drink tea. At that moment, Yuki who had been wearing a gloomy expression when we were walking to the shop suddenly stared at me with an intense gaze and spoke.

“Let me go with you.”

“Hm? To Kyoto? Don’t you have work tomorrow?”

“No!! I mean to Korea!!”

“What did you say!?”

“I’ll buy my own ticket in Narita, so I’ll see you in Korea!!”

“Hey, wait a sec...”

“I really want to visit your home country, Mr. Junhyuk. I won’t burden you with any extra travel expenses. Let’s go together~ Please?”

In truth, I was traveling for business, but I was also planning to stop by my hometown as well. Yuki wouldn’t have much fun following me around...

However, looking at her fervent eyes, I knew there would be no point in stopping her.

“I’m not traveling to sightsee Yuki, is that okay with you?”

“Yes, I don’t care about sightseeing.”

“I’m going to meet up with a person from my hometown, so you won’t be able to go see any attractions.”

“Your hometown? That’s even better~!!”

... I inadvertently smiled after listening to her unpredictable reply. No, it was definitely something Yuki would say.

I locked my eyes with her for a moment before opening my mouth.

“Alright, we’ll go together.”

---

One week from that day.

I changed my ticket to the flight in Narita airport and arrived together with Yuki at the airport.

“Ah... I’m shaking. My heart’s been pounding since a while ago.”

“It’s nothing to stress about. The flight will only take around an hour. You don’t have to worry about anything Yuki.”

“I haven’t slept properly last night too. When I was in elementary school, I felt the same way the night before the school picnic... It’s been a long time since I felt this way...”

“... Do you want to take antiemetic pills?”

“I’ve already swallowed some.”

“You prepared thoroughly for sure...”

I smirked and patted her head after listening to her response. Every once in awhile, I would pet her like this because she was cute, and she would shut her eyes and act like a lively puppy.

Several minutes had passed.

After buying a few items from the department store inside the airport, our departure time was approaching.

“Aren’t we going to be late for our flight? We only have a few minutes left until departure!”

“It’s fine. It’ll take some time for everyone to board the plane; we can just be the last ones on.”

“But I still want to ride it now.”

Yuki pulled my arm and urged me on; she must’ve been nervous and excited before her first international trip. In the end, we boarded the plane as soon as the gates opened and were the first ones on the plane. A row of Korean stewardesses was lined up at the entrance greeting the passengers with a bright smile.

“Wow... Beautiful Korean ladies~!!”

Although Yuki was on the short side, she didn’t particularly lose to them in the looks department. But she started muttering under breath anyways while looking at them.

“They must’ve drunk a ton of milk when they were growing up...”

“Welcome aboard. I’ll help you with finding your seat.”

After we showed our tickets to a stewardess who extended one hand to us with a smile, she bowed and gestured us to the stairway.

“The business class seats are this way.”



“Thank you.”

Because it was a such a short flight I contemplated on flying economy, but I wanted Yuki to have a good first travel experience so I bought business class for us both. At that moment, I heard Yuki who had taken off her shoes asking the stewardess questions.

“Should I just carry my shoes like this?”

“.....”

Did she really believe the joke I told to her as a joke in Kyoto? The surrounding stewardesses all turned their heads and started giggling.

“Ah, you can keep your shoes on in the plane, mam.”

“What!?”

Yuki turned as red as a chili pepper after hearing the stewardess’s reply and sprinted up the stairs while holding her shoes.

“Oh, that lady is so cute~”

I walked away from the laughter and up the stairs to find Yuki who had sat down in the very back seat with her head buried in her arms.

“Um, Yuki...”

“Don’t talk to me right now. I’m dying from embarrassment~!!”

“No, I’m trying to say...”

“I told you, please don’t talk to me right now...”

“No... That’s not your seat. You can’t sit in any random seat.”

“Oh...”

She ended up moving to the seat that I pointed to and buried her face again.

“Are you mad?”

“No... I’m just flustered.”

“Sorry. I was teasing you in Kyoto because you asked me with such a serious expression. I didn’t know you’d actually believe it.”

“I don’t think I can look at those stewardesses in the face...”

“Don’t worry. There must be one or two people who ask that same question in every flight. It’s nothing to worry about.”

“Really?”

As I nodded my head after Yuki poked her head out to look at me, she finally began to look around.

“Wow... But there aren’t as many seats as I thought in an airplane? There is only space for 12 people here.

“Mmm... if you’re curious, you can go downstairs to see what it’s like.”

“Downstairs?”

She tilted her head in confusion and walked downstairs to inspect the situation there and came back to me with a surprised face.

“There’s a ton of people below us. The seats are closely packed together. Why is it so different from here?”

“You’ve ridden on a train before, right?”

“Yes.”

“You can think of our seats as the premium class in a train. Of course, the price is a bit more expensive as well.”

“By how much?”

“Compared to the economy seats below, it should be around 1.5 ~ 2 times more expensive?”

“Whaat!? You said our flight would only take around an hour.”

“Well, I’d rather travel with comfort. You see, the economy seats are way too narrow.”

“I’ve never sat in premium seats even on trains...”

“I’m paying for the tickets so you can just relax and enjoy the flight. We’ should be taking off soon.”

The speakerphone blared with an announcement the moment I finished my sentence.

-Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome aboard our flight with service from Narita to Kimpo, South Korea. We ask that you please fasten your seatbelts at this time and secure all baggage underneath your seat and in the overhead compartments. Thank you for choosing us. Enjoy your flight.-

After fastening her seatbelt, Yuki swallowed a ball of saliva and asked me a question.

“What does it feel like to take-off?”

“Mmm... It’s similar to a riding on a roller coaster. It’s pretty fun.”

“I hate roller coasters... “

At this point, our plane had arrived on the runway and began to speed up. Yuki extended her hand and spoke.

“Urhmm... Can you hold my hand?”

I smiled at her cuteness and squeezed her hand.

And as the plane finally took off into the air, Yuki’s hands began trembling.

“We’re flying... What do I do...”

After a while, we could look below us to see Japan from a bird’s eye view.

“Wow....”

With the excitement that only a first-time plane rider could experience, Yuki squealed as she looked out the window. And as our plane rose above the clouds, a sea of white came into our view.

“I looked at the pictures that my co-workers showed me from their business trip, but it’s much prettier seeing this view in person.”

Yuki seemed to be rid of her nervous tension as she couldn’t take her eyes off the windows wearing a big smile on her face. Well, I had a similar reaction to her on my first plane ride too.

I rode on my first airplane when I was in middle school; the memory of going on a school-wide trip to Jeju island brought a smile to my lips as well.

Yuki had been staring out of the window for the entire hour-long plane ride, while occasionally snapping a few photos every few minutes. I felt this before, but she really did have a talent as a photographer. Even though she couldn’t immediately check the pictures right after she took them like a digital camera could, she’d been diligently recording her pictures on the film canister.

And an announcement for landing came on.

---

Yuki’s first impressions after safely landing at the Kimpo airport was...

“Eurgh... it’s freezing here. Is Korea always this cold?”

Unlike the Narita airport, there wasn't a direct tunnel way that connected the passengers to the plane in the Kimpo airport. Instead, a stairway extender would be latched on to the plane for the passengers to get off.

The temperature contained the chilly frost of the period between late February and March. Yuki was trembling as she gripped on to her light coat. Korea was a little colder than Japan after all. I took out a scarf from my bag and wrapped it around her neck.

“I forgot to tell you that it's cold in Korea at this time of the year. You should feel better with this around you. The terminal bus that'll take us to the airport should be coming soon so wait just a little more!”

“Thank you.”

After completing the long and tedious landing inspection, we stepped out of the departure hall to find the Kimpo airport buzzing with foreigners.

-Harmony and Progress! The world comes to Seoul!-

Seeing the familiar 1988 Olympic slogan plastered all over the place finally made me feel like I was truly back in Korea.

# Chapter 60 :

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“Woah~ It’s a tiger mascot. Cute~!!”

Yuki who was looking around at the airport shifted her attention to the 88 Olympics tiger mascot and started clicking her shutters.

Ah... I remember this mascot.

When I was little, I bought this tiger mascot-shaped ice cream from street vendors a few times; I didn’t know any better and thought the design was psychopathic, forcing me to destroy the cute tiger head to access the ice cream inside.

After thinking back on this memory, I wanted to see just who was the designer of that icecream...

“Let’s go to the hotel to drop our luggage off first.”

“Okay~”

Yuki followed behind me closely, afraid to get lost in her first international trip. We stepped out of the airport and called a taxi over, and the kind middle-aged taxi driver had loaded Yuki’s luggage to the trunk for her.

“I’m fine with the bus. Won’t taking the taxi be expensive?”



“It’s fine. Unlike Japan, Korean taxis tend to be on the cheaper side with a starting rate of 600 Wons.”

“600 Wons? Not Yens?”

In conclusion, the cost of transportation wouldn’t exceed 5,000 Wons (\$5) for a ride to Myungdong. In any case, it’s really been a long time since I’ve stepped foot on my home country again. I was finally visiting Korea 5 years after the time slip.

I wanted to visit earlier; But even though I could picture my childhood home and neighborhood, I couldn’t quite remember the exact location up until now..

Who would be living there now. Would I have to meet face-to-face with my younger parents?

“Your complexion doesn’t look so good. Are you okay?”

“No, there’s been some burdens on my mind lately.”

“Is it because of me? Should I not have followed you...”

“Don’t misunderstand Yuki, it’s not because of you. As a matter of fact, I feel better because you’re with me.”

That was the truth. Being with Yuki gave me a huge boost to my morale and was a comforting presence in many ways.

Yuki was alternating between looking out of the window at the unfamiliar scenery of Seoul city with wonder and smiling towards me from time to time.

---

As it didn't take long to arrive at our hotel, we were able to quickly unpack our luggage in our reserved room.

The view of the Namsan tower from our suite terrace was spectacular. Even now, Yuki had gripped her camera with her small hands and was snapping pictures.

"I have to go somewhere now Yuki. Do you want to stay and rest here?"

"No, I'll go with you."

After putting on a thick-gray coat and strapping a camera in one arm, Yuki left the hotel with me. I wanted to give her a tour around Seoul but the priority was to visit my hometown.

"Sorry, I'll try to finish up as soon as possible and give you a tour of Seoul in the afternoon."

Yuki smiled and shook her head in response.

“Mmm~ You don’t have to worry about me. I’m more interested in seeing your hometown Mr. Junhyuk.”

“I’m... glad to hear that.”

I patted her head and stepped on to the taxi on standby in front of the hotel.

“West-Namga Myungshin district please.”

“Myungshin district?”

“Yes... Is there a problem?”

“No... That... Today is a friday so I don’t think I can go through the university entrance. I’ll see how far I can go.”

Hmm? What does Friday and a university entrance have to do with each other?

After leaving the Myungdong district, we headed towards Hwagwan.

“You guys can turn left at the intersection. The car won’t be able to go any further than this, so I’ll drop you off here.”

“Ah... Thank you.”

After paying the fare, Yuki and I got off the taxi to find out just what the taxi driver meant by not being able to go through the university. Oh my... So friday was an assembly day for college students...

“Mr. Junhyuk, why are there so many police here?”

‘Even in the howling winds, In a perilous situation, We gather together....

A night in which fleshs rip, a night in which we suffer. Facing the freeze of dawn, we stand together.

We stand together with love... With love...

We will strive for our dreams as long as we stand on this Earth.

We will win...’

A group of students who were linked together by a red string emerged into the streets and started singing the song ‘We stand together’. The timing couldn’t be more perfect...

“Mr. Junhyuk, what in the world is happening”

“Shh, it’ll be a headache if we get stuck in that. Let’s try to pass as quietly as possible. Grab my hand just in case...”

Amidst this unusual situation, Yuki reached for my hand with her trembling hands. Moments later, we began navigating ourselves through the streets without trying to catch the attention of the university students.

‘Just a little more until we make it out of here. Please don’t cause a scene...’

But my hope was shattered into pieces when one student threw a smoke bomb.

“Son of a b\*tch!! Capture them all!!!”

“Woo-ah~!!!”

Pang!! Clock!! Crash~!! Tear!!

As if we were in a movie scene, I held on to Yuki’s hands and sprinted across the sidewalk amidst the chaos. Following the initial smoke bomb, more objects were thrown including flour bombs, filling the air with a white smoke.

“Mr. Junhyuk, cough cough. My eyes and throat are burning.”

“Just wait a little longer Yuki! Here, let’s go into this alleyway.”

In the end, we gave up on walking through the main road and

came into an alleyway. Yuki's red eyes were pouring big streams of tears from the gas bomb.

Minutes later, those students had scattered to various directions to escape capture by the police, and a few ended up running through the alley we were in. If a policeman were to show up right now, we could be accused of being with them.

After immediately checking my surroundings, I stepped inside a slightly opened gate and hid myself behind a pot. We did nothing wrong, yet we were getting caught up in this seemingly movie-like situation.

As the footsteps of the policemen grew more and more distant, we came out of hiding and I washed Yuki's face with the fountain installed in the yard. This was the first time Yuki had ever experienced a gas on her face; her face was a mess.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes... Is it okay to go into another person's home like this though?”

...

The courtyard seems familiar... At that moment, one middle-aged lady poked her head out from the balcony.

“Are you guys alright over there?”

After wiping the moisture off of my face, I quickly turned my head to apologize to the lady.

“Oh? Ah... We’re completely fine. Sorry for intruding like this, we were in a hurry to wash our face.”

Her voice... I was sure I heard it before. Oh my god!? She was the mother of one my childhood friend, Noori!!! After all, this courtyard seem familiar... I looked around the house to confirm that it was indeed my friend Noori’s home.

When I was playing tag in my childhood years, I would often come inside to have a quick drink of water before running back out. But to think I’d find my way back like this again...

Thereafter, Yuki who was right besides me also apologized to the lady with her broken Korean while rubbing her eyes.

“I...I am sorry,”

“Oh no... young miss, you shouldn’t be rubbing your eyes like that. The fountain water must be cold, here come inside for a moment.”

“What? Oh... No... I just...”

From what I remembered, Noori’s mother was an extremely kind

person who would always help others in need. Inviting two strangers who had come into her yard without permission... This was a special moment where I felt the warmth of a truly kind spirit.

“What did the lady say?”

“She told you to come inside.”

“What!? We intruded into her house... Are you sure she said that? Do you know her by any chance?”

Should... I say I do know her or I don't know her... As I awkwardly smiled and stepped inside the entrance way, Noori's mom called out from inside.

“Please stay there for a moment~ Noori!! Can you bring me a towel?”

“Okay~”

Subsequently, a cute little boy who was wearing cargo pants appeared from one of the rooms and bowed to us in a 90 degree angle. Yo... Noori!! It's really been a long time.

“Hello, My name is Kim Noori.”

What a cute little boy. He's acting out what he learned from his



preschool. Holding a toy in one hand, Noori hopped over to us, forgetting about his mother's request.

“Hello Noori.”

“Wow. You're a pretty lady!!”

“Kim Noori~!! I asked you to bring a towel over!!”

“Oh!! Right.”

Noori was shocked into action and sprinted to the bathroom after his mom shouted at him. Seeing this, Yuki stifled in laughter. Moments later, Noori's mom had soaked the towel that Noori brought and handed it to Yuki.

“Press the towel onto your eyes instead of rubbing it.”

“Arigato Gozaimasu. Thank you very much.”

“You're a Japanese? And you as well?”

“No, I'm a Korean. This is my girlfriend Yuki. Thank you very much for your help.”

“Gamsa hamnida.”

Yuki also thanked Noori's mom with an accented Korean. At that moment, Nuri who had been looking at Yuki spoke up.

“Pretty lady speaks funny~ Say it again.”

In response, his mom gave him a light knuckle on his head and apologized to us.

“I'm so sorry, he's still learning his manners.”

“We're totally fine. He's really cute.”

“You guys must be thirsty after getting hit with that gas bomb; I'll bring some juice over in just a minute.”

“No no no, we can't...”

“If you go out right now, you might get hit with the gas again so please stay for a while.”

There were still some clamors outside, so it was probably in our best interest to listen to Noori's mom.

“Then, we'll have to excuse ourselves until the gas clears up. Thank you so much for your hospitality.”

“Our living room floor is cold. Let's move to the other room.”

She gestured us over to one of the rooms and headed over to the kitchen to get us some drinks.

“Wow... The floor is warm, Mr. Kang.”

To the Japanese who spent their winters armed only with a thick blanket and a fireplace, heated floors were a novelty to them. Yuki placed her hands on the floor and exclaimed in surprise.

Moments later, Noori's mom brought two glasses of juice in a platter into the room. And as soon as I saw the glass cups, one childhood memory surfaced again.

‘The symbol of rich households... It's the Delmont glass cup.’

# Chapter 61 :

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When I was young, I used these very Delmont glass cups as a standard to determine if my friends were well-off or not.

As a child, I remember these glasses being heavy when I was drinking juices from them. Every now and then, Nuri's mom would give us a box of Delmont glasses that she saved up so we could run to the supermarket and exchange them for treats.

“Thank you.”

After seeing the nostalgic scene of Nuri chugging the juice down with his hands clamped around the glass, I knew this trip would be worthwhile.

“Hey mom, can I have some Derong-Derong?”

I almost spewed the juice in my mouth after Nuri's random outburst. A Derong-Derong on top of a Delmont orange juice... These memories were like a one-two punch combo...

A Derong-Derong was a type of fruit sherbet ice cream and one of my most favorite treats when I was a child. It had a cute design where I could detach the plastic leaf from the fruit-shaped container and use it as a spoon. Although there were times when the ice cream was frozen too much and the plastic leaves would break off and fall into the ice cream, making it very sticky...

“You just drank that juice Nuri, and you’ll get a cold if you eat cold things in the winter.”

“But I still want one. Derong-Derong~ Derong-Derong~”

Umm... I would like some Derong-Derong as well, Nuri’s mom...

---

“Thank you so much for your hospitality.”

“This is your first time visiting Korea in a while, and today was a student protest.... How unlucky for the miss.”

Seeing Nuri’s mom who was looking at us with a regretful face, I opened my wallet and took several paper bills out.

“Excuse me... I feel bad for leaving a mess at your place. Here, this isn’t much, but you can buy Nuri some snacks with these.”

“No no~ I’m fine, you don’t have to...”

“Please take it.”

After struggling back and forth with Nuri’s mom a few time, I was finally able to grasp the money into her hands and quickly stepped outside. Following that, she must’ve given up on refusing to take the money as she waved in resignation at us.

We waved back at her after we were a distance away (So she couldn't give the money back to us) and moved our feet again.

“She was really nice, and Nuri was so cute too...”

“Right?”

I wiped the dust off of Yuki's eyes and offered her my hand. Although that experience was a little scary, thanks to Nuri's mom, Yuki must've felt reassured as she happily took my hand.

“Mr. Junhyuk,”

“Hmm?”

“What was the Derong-Derong that Nuri was talking about earlier?”

“Ah... it's an ice cream that I loved when I was a kid... I'll buy one for you on our way back to the hotel.”

“Really? I can't wait to try it.”

“This is your first time being out of Japan, you must've been scared back there.”

“I’m fine. I got to meet Nuri’s mom thanks to it. All in all, it was a really unique experience.”

“Thanks for coming with me.”

“You took the words right out of my mouth, I should be thanking you instead.”

---

My childhood home wasn’t far from Nuri’s house. It was around a 15 minute walk.

In reality, I hadn’t met Nuri yet during this period. I would meet him in second grade, so it would be two years from now before my childhood self would meet him.

This time slip allowed me to meet a 7 year old Nuri as an adult; this was truly an incredible experience.

The student protests should be over soon, but we couldn’t let our guard down. Was that the reason why? The streets were deadly silent even though the sun hadn’t set yet.

How long did we walk like this? The various shops and supermarkets were slowly becoming familiar to me; we were almost there. After we turn in that corner...

As we neared by childhood home, my heart began to

involuntarily pulsate rapidly.

“Mr. Junhyuk? Your hand...”

“Ah, sorry...”

I had been unconsciously squeezing on Yuki’s hand. As sweat began to gather in my palms, I took out a handkerchief.

“Are you okay?”

“We’re almost there. We just have to turn around that corner.”

“So I’ll finally get to see your old home. Let’s go~!!”

“Ah, w..wait...!”

I haven’t mentally prepared myself.

In the end, I was pulled along by Yuki around the corner and was greeted with the sight of a blue gate surrounded by white-walls.

“Is this your house? It’s really big.”

“This is our landlord’s house... We were just renting a room here, and we had to enter through the back door...”



I turned my head and heard several kids singing in the alleyway.

Inside the fog~ A calamity~

A dark star

A dark star

A dark star

Appeared~

Defeated and captured, before fleeing away~

# The chasing shadow

Detective

Detective

Detective

Barbeck~

Justice will prevail. Go Barbeck~

I looked at my wristwatch to see the small hand pointing at five.

Was it a elementary school trip? A faint memory arose from the singing children; I brushed it off and walked over to the small black door installed on the white walls.

This was our house. I would be greeted with our small kitchen as soon as I opened that door. And through the second door in the kitchen was the small one room that my parents and I had slept together in.

“Someone seems to be living here?”

A barely-visible light was emanating from the windows over the wall. What I was curious about was whether the people who lived here were my parents...

At that moment, a voice that I’ve been missing for a long time rang out.

“Junhyuk is not back in the house in time for dinner again. I told him to come home before the sunset...”



This was definitely my mom's voice. At that instant, the last conversation I had with her surfaced in my mind.

...Have a safe trip... Junhyuk...

Listening to my mom's voice again after such a long time brought tears to my eyes. I took a moment and stood in front of the instance to observe her through the window.

While she was in the process of cooking the savory bean-paste stew, the aroma must have gotten too strong as she opened the door and came outside.

“Where could he... oh? Who are you people?”

Due to the sudden turn of events, Yuki and I froze on the spot.

“Ah... I... mistook this house for another building. I'm so sorry.”

After excusing myself to my mom, I grabbed Yuki's hands and walked back to the alleyway. Yuki also seemed to be surprised as she was heaving her chest while she spoke.

“Oh, I didn't know you would rush out like that.”

“Right...”

“...Mr. Junhyuk, are you crying right now?”

“No, I’m not.”

“Your eyes are red.”

“It’s just some dust.”

“I’m fine.”

At that moment, I heard the voice of my mom calling me from the inside of the alley. It seemed like the young me was out playing somewhere.

“Junhyuk~ Junhyuk Kang~ ”

I almost ran to her while shouting ‘I’m here mom!’ in response to my mother’s frantic call. Yuki who was beside me opened her mouth with a curious expression.

“Huh? Isn’t she calling your name?”

“Her son probably has the same name as me...”

“The same name~!! Wow~ That’s so interesting. How could someone have the same name as you in the house you used to live

in?”

“That’s what I’m saying... haha.”

I tried to pass it off by laughing and turned my back to my mother’s calls.

As I loved to play outside when I was a kid, I wasn’t the most obedient kid to my parents. After mindlessly running outside with my friends for hours on end, the sun would eventually set; And I would finally return home to find my mom waiting with a broomstick in her hands...

The young me would also be receiving a punishment... But seeing my mother’s face for even a brief moment like this, I felt a sense of communion.

... Where did I hang around at this age anyway? I stopped walking and asked Yuki.

“I have a few places to stop by. Is that okay?”

“What?”

There were actually two reasons why I visited Korea.

The first reason was to confirm the fact that my family was still alive and well living in my childhood home, and if I did encounter

a younger me, I would give him a mobile console that I brought from Japan.

The second reason was to meet a certain someone that I would meet up with tomorrow afternoon.

“I’m fine with that. You haven’t visited your hometown in awhile so I know you want to visit places.”

Yuki had agreed to my proposal without any hesitation once again. She must be dying to go sightseeing in a new country. I felt so much gratitude towards her for following my schedule without any complaints.

‘I should be able to find him soon. There weren’t many places that I could be...’

---

The very first location I visited was a food stand near the subway station.

One could fill their entire stomach here by bringing just 300 Wons (30 cents) to eat an enormous serving of spicy rice cakes. Due to the stand lady’s generosity, I would often eat an entire meal’s worth of food with relatively little money. This tiny food stand would grow to a full-fledged restaurant in the future.

But I couldn’t see my young-self here.

‘Is it the popeyes shop then?’

I headed over to a small shop near the food stand. Even though my family didn’t have enough money to buy toys for me, I frequented this store to look at all the toys on display.

Was it my 3rd year of middle school? There was a nationwide mini car toy boom that occurred after the animation ‘Run, Boomerang’ aired on TV. I remember desperately wanting a mini car so much that I stared intently at a mini car on the display for several consecutive days. I thought my old self would be at places like these but...

“He’s not here either...”

If he hadn’t gone home by now, I knew what the fate of my younger self would be; a horrendous pounding by my mother. He wouldn’t be playing in the playground with his friends as the sun had already begun setting, and I visited everywhere that he might be in. Could he be at his friend's house?

At that moment, a conversation of a boy who looked to be in middle school and his friend caught my ears.

“Have you tried playing Twin Dragon yet? It came in at the MyungRang arcade not too long ago, and it’s really fun.”

‘The... MyungRang arcade?’

That arcade was a distance away from my current location, but thinking of the MyungRang arcade that I frequently sneaked off to without my parents knowing, I rubbed my forehead and let out a long sigh. Yuki reacted by asking me a question.

“What’s wrong?”

“I think I know where that bastard is...”

“What? Who do you mean by “that bastard”...”

“Nothing... let’s go and find out.”

‘If he’s really there, I think I would be disappointed at myself.

## Chapter 62 :

The bright yellow streetlights were turned on as the sun had already set. And I had hurriedly crossed the street to arrive at a decrepit building and descended to the basement.

“Where are we now?”

“Oh, that’s... You can call it a type of a Korean-arcade.”

“There is an arcade in the basement of a building like this?”

... Of course, it wouldn’t be as good as the game centers in Japan either, being in a place like this. But did I really start frequenting these arcades since I was 7 years old? No way. No matter how I was into games, being 7 was way too young. My younger-self should be at home by now eating dinner....

I comforted myself and opened the basement door to be greeted with the putrid smell of cigarettes. Wow... I hadn’t realized this when I was a child, but this place was no different than a dungeon....In the midst of the noisy background music, I looked around the arcade. Thankfully, I only saw the silhouettes of middle and high schoolers. There weren’t any kids in grade school as far as I could see. Of course, this was to be expected....

As I thought to myself ‘there was no way a seven-year-old could...’ and turned my head....

I spotted two small bodies huddled in one corner playing the action game ‘Woodpecker’...

‘Could they... be...’

I tilted my head in curiosity and approached the duo, to be greeted the sight of two scrawny children who were fervently pounding on the buttons and pulling the lever up and down in excitement. One of them was Yongmin, another one of my childhood friends whom I had befriended in preschool. These rascals sure were getting along with each other very nicely!!

Seeing the blue and red woodpeckers swinging their fists around wildly on the screen, an exasperated sigh came out of my mouth.

“I’m going crazy. So you little rascals were here playing games all day... Hey!!”

The BGM had entranced the rascals; my outburst went unnoticed by the duo. I observed them for a moment before approaching them again and asked. “Do you guys know what time it is?”

“Ahh!! You scared me, mister!! Who are you!?”

Since Yuki was watching me, I suppressed my thoughts of giving them a well-deserved slap on the forehead and opened my mouth.

“Your mother sent me here to get you. Return home this instant!!”



“Really!? What time is it right now?”

“It’s already dark outside you little rascal!”

“... I’m dead. My mom’s going to murder me.”

The little Junhyuk stood up abruptly in disbelief after hearing that it was night already. Seeing Yongmin who was sitting beside him turning pale as well, I concluded that these two were probably in here for hours playing video games and not paying attention to the time.

“Yongmin, let’s run home now!!”

The young Junhyuk grabbed onto his friend’s arm and hurriedly left the arcade. And Yuki and I had also run after them.

“Hey!! Brat, wait a second.”

After hearing my shout, the young Junhyuk stopped running and paused.

“Yeah?”

“Here, buy some meat at the butchers with this on the way home.”

“Who are you, mister? My mom said to not take things like this from strangers...”

“It’s fine, just take it. But don’t spend it on anything else, alright? Buy some meat on the way home. You know the shop near your house that you frequent with your mom; ask for 50,000 (\$50) Wons worth of beef, okay?”

“Beef... Broth and barbecuing... 50,000 Wons...”

Junhyuk was repeatedly muttering my words as if he were trying to engrave it into his memory. Looking at Yongmin who was watching this scene with envious eyes, I also handed him a wad of cash for 50,000 Wons.

“If you accomplish this mission, I’ll give you another gift tomorrow. You have to keep our promise!”

“A gift?”

“Yeah. I’ll be near your house tomorrow, so let’s meet at the supermarket around the corner at 5 P.M.”

Junhyuk was eyeing me with a slightly suspicious gaze, but seeing how the location I stated was the supermarket right next to his house, he slowly nodded his head.

“Then you two should hurry off now. Your parents must be worried.”

“Okay~!!”

The two jokesters held each other's hands tightly and started running off to their houses. Yuki came up to me and asked me a question after observing this quirky exchange. “Do you know these kids? What were you talking about?”

“Hmm. They reminded me of myself when I was young so..... I told them to stop gaming this late and return home.”

“You were like this when you were young?”

“Yeah..”

I let out a grin as I saw the silhouette of the two children growing smaller.

Rumbleee...

Mmm? What was this? I quickly turned my attention to Yuki who shied away from my gaze and murmured. “I didn't have anything to eat after the brunch we had this morning... I.. I'm starving.”

Oops... I was too focused on my task. I had completely forgotten

about eating. My journey to find my childhood home had been nerve wrecking for me to say the least; having a meal was the last thing on my mind. Yuki's reminder snapped me back to my own hunger.

"Sorry. Today was such a crazy day for me, I completely forgot about eating. You should have said something if you were hungry."

"Mmm.... I won't die if I skip a few meals, But my legs are a bit sore from all the walking we did, hehe~"

As I showed my dejection, Yuki stuck her tongue out and smiled brightly like she had always been doing. This sight brought an unexplainable sense of comfort and relief to me.

"I finished everything I had to do for today, so we should eat dinner first and head back to our hotel."

"Okaay~ What are we going to eat?"

"I don't know... do you want to try anything in particular?"

"Wouldn't you know the local restaurants well?"

"Mmm... I haven't been here in a very long time, so I'm just as clueless as you..."

"Then let's go with what you liked to eat when you were young,

Mr. Junhyuk.”

“What... I used to eat as a kid?”

Hoh... Her words brought up a specific image in my mind... I did want to try that again, but wouldn't it be too lackluster for Yuki who spent an entire day keeping up with me.

---

“Here is your rice cake sticks.”

“Thank you.”

Five sticks covered with a spicy sauce was served on a green plastic plate. Being 200 Wons per stick, the total amounted to 1000 Wons (\$1). This rice cake treat was an instant favorite amongst children and still is today.

Yuki must have been famished, but she still resisted the urge to dig in and took out her shutter to snap photos of the food first.

“What is the name of this dish?”

“It's called a rice cake stick. A wooden stick is inserted into a rectangular rice cake and cooked with oil and red sauce.”

“Ahh.... Is it spicy?”

“No, it shouldn’t be. At most, it’ll be a tangy flavor in your mouth.”

“Hmm...”

After being somewhat comforted by my words, Yuki nibbled on a stick. Shortly afterward, her eyes lighted up and she made an incredibly astonished face.

“Hoo..hoo.. Wow... T...This is amazing~!! The outside part is crispy while the insides are chewy providing a stark contrast of flavors that mesh perfectly together, really. The red sauce isn’t spicy either~!!”

“Right?”

But wasn’t that a bit exaggerated for a 200 Won street food? At that moment, the stall lady brought the main plate over.

“The tiny sushi and the rice cakes are here. And this broth is on the house~”

Our table was filled with various food items, but it only amounted to 30,000 Wons (\$3). It was a pitiful compensation for Yuki compared to what she went through today because of me.

The meal should be tasty though...

“I think this rice cake dish will be spicy from the smell.”

“It’ll be spicy, but this was still one of my favorite foods when I was a kid. If it’s too spicy for you, you can wipe the sauce in the broth and eat it without any flavors.”

“Hmm...”

After contemplating for a short moment, Yuki grabbed a rice cake with a fork and placed it in her mouth.

---

“It is spicy, but it’s juicy and has a unique flavor. I like it.”

Yuki gave a satisfied expression while holding a fork in one hand. Nostalgic memories from my childhood surfaced in my mind again seeing the stall lady stirring a pot full of red rice cakes.

---

“Thank you. Come again.”

After taking care of the bill, I called out to the stall lady who was smiling back at me.

“Is there anything wrong? Was there a problem with the bill?”

“No, that’s not it...”

“Then?”

“This might sound weird, but you might want to go to the hospital for a checkup.”

“What? A hospital? I’m perfectly healthy.”

“Actually, I’m a medical school graduate, and you seem to be sick somewhere just based on your complexion.”

“Me?”

“I know you’re busy with the food stall, but please heed my words and go to a hospital for a checkup.”

“Ah... Okay... I will do that.”

“Thank you again for the amazing rice cakes.”

This very food stall was frequented by me when I was a kid. And due to the generous personality of the lady running the stall and the amazing rice cakes, her business went very well. After working tirelessly whether it hailed or snowed, she had collapsed onto the floor in front of the young me one day.



Thankfully, she was able to regain consciousness because she was moved to the hospital quickly, but the stress from overworking had taken a toll on her health, eventually claiming her life thereafter.

Seeing a familiar face that I saw daily suddenly disappear left a big shock in my mind when I was a kid. I definitely wanted to see her again when I came to Korea and tell her this.

Thankfully since this was the year 1988, she should be able to take care of whatever illness she has.... After walking out of the food stall, I quickly ran to Yuki who shivering in the cold night wind.

---

The next day...

I awoke to the morning rays shining onto my face in my hotel bed. Yuki must have been drained from yesterday as she was still sleeping soundly next to me.

Just to clear up any misunderstandings, but nothing happened between Yuki and me last night.

I wanted to immediately rest after our dinner last night, but Yuki, being drawn by the plethora of glowing street signs, eventually won me over with her innocent pleading eyes to explore the city some more.

She spotted a street food that was similar to the ‘Taiyaki’ back in Japan and expressed delight in comparing the difference in tastes. In the end, after roaming the streets of Myungdong well into midnight, we finally came back to our hotel and instantly fell asleep after taking a shower.

I quietly left my bed to not wake Yuki up and headed to the bathroom. I came out with a towel drying my wet hair to see an awake Yuki who was staring out the window.

“The view here is great. That tower over there on top of the mountain is the famous ‘Namsan Tower’?”

“Yeah, shall we climb up there after we take care of the business today? The view from up there should be great as well.”

“Really? Mmm~ Only if you manage to finish your work quickly. I don’t want to distract you from your work.”

“Don’t worry. We won’t be walking around nearly as much as yesterday.”

“Then I’ll also wash up now.”

Yuki walked into the bathroom while being wrapped in her blankets as if she was embarrassed to let me see her with her pajamas.

While she was taking a shower, I lighted a cigarette on the terrace and examined my bag to see if I was missing any items. Inside my bag was the mobile Gamboy that I would gift to the young me, along with a cartridge that contained a special message to go with it.

“To think... I would personally make a game that I would give to my younger self.”

I let out a stream of laughter as I looked at the cartridge that I was going to hand to Junhyuk.

“That brat would love this.”

“Mr. Junhyuk~ Are you on the terrace?”

“Oh, you’ve showered already?”

“Wait!! I’ll put on my clothes really quick, so please stay there for a moment even though it might be cold!”

... Shit, I should’ve just went in pretending like I didn’t know anything.

## Chapter 63 :

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After having a light meal at the hotel, we hopped in a taxi and headed to Myeongdong. Various historic buildings were starting to emerge as we traveled through the north street.

The year 1995. As a part of President Kim Youngsam's 'Correcting history' initiative, this building would be demolished, so I felt a sense of sentimentality seeing this building again.

During the period where plans were being made to demolish the building, per the presumptuous request of Japan to allow them to relocate the building because a Japanese architect had built it, Korean president Kim Youngsam released a video footage of the building being demolished to the whole world in a fit of anger.

Although his actions were unfitting as the president of South Korea, his decision still resonated with me.

Yuki who was staring out the window together with me focused her attention on the building and asked.

“So that’s the building being used as a museum?”

“Yeah. The building behind that used to be the palace of our king.”

“Wow... To think my countrymen would erect a building like this in front of a palace. I feel ashamed as a Japanese for

“.....”

“I told my parents about going to this trip with you, and my father told me this story. Japan had made a grave mistake against Korea this time. He labored the point that it wouldn't be enough to atone for our sins even if the entire nation of Japan apologized.”

“Your parents must be truly compassionate people telling you this.”

“Actually... I haven't told you yet, but my mother is Korean.”

“Really?”

“Yes. This is why my father is happy whenever I talk about you.”

... It looked like I had somehow gained Yuki's father's blessing without even meeting him. But Yuki was almost 20 years old now and she said she also had an older sister. Marrying 23~24 ago to a Korean woman definitely must have been a difficult decision for him.... I can see where Yuki's fearlessness came from....

&

A while later. The taxi driver had dropped us off at the opposite side of Myungshin gate in a relatively narrow street. A small hill called the '100 year mountain' would appear after walking down

this path, where I would sometimes go to play as a child. But the sentimental part of this trip was over, I wasn't here to visit the 100 year mountain.

After stepping off of the taxi, I hoisted a heavy backpack on one shoulder.

“What's that?”

“Oh this? Hmm.... You can say it's a business tool.”

“What? Business?”

At this point in time, I did not have the slightest bit of influence in Korea. Video games were still in its infancy here. Of course, Mintendo's Family and 'Game Bear', a rebranded version of the NEGA Disk was being sold through official licensing by the S Corporation.

No, arcade machines that carried illegal copies of titles from Mintendo were the most common form of video games right now. However, the illegal copies of Family games that were being made in Taiwan were better in some ways.

Anyways, the person I was about to meet was a future member of the developer team in Korea that would go on to produce a plethora of popular titles in the 90s.

As I stepped into a shop near the Myungshin marketplace, a long

forgotten PC store from my childhood came into view.

### -Mantra Computer-

This was the place that would find the latest copy of Dragon Warrior 4 and lead me down the path of games. The interior of the shop was seemingly no different than a small convenience store with the plain looking show windows displaying only a handful of cartridges. At that moment, Yuki who had been looking in through the show window shouted to me with an excited voice.

“Mr. Junhyuk, there is a copy of Dragon Emblem here!!”

Oh! This was a surprise. The Dragon Emblem cartridge that was in one corner of the display under the tag ‘Rare Japanese Import’ was showing a price of 100,000 Wons. (\$100) Second-hand stores in Japan were also selling for around this price range. I stared at the Dragon Emblem cartridge that I found on Korean soil for a while and entered the shop.

“Welcome.”

A man in his 30s greeted us with his raspy voice as he came out of the curtains from the backroom. The Mantra Computer shop was a dual purpose infrastructure with half the shop being a game store and the rest being a workshop for the owner. He must have been eating lunch right before we came as the aroma of bean-paste noodles were permeating throughout the interior of the store, and I could detect hints of cigarette smoke mixed in with the smell of the noodles creating an unpleasant stench.

“We want to sell some cartridges for the Family console to you.”

“Oh... really? I opened this shop recently so I’m low on funds, but could I see the products first?”

As I plopped a heavy bag on top of the counter, a loud crash reverberated around the tiny store.

“... Just how much stuff did you bring...”

“Around 30 units?”

“30 units? I don’t know if I would be able to... purchase them all...”

“Please look at the product first before you make any decision.”

“Alright.”

I took out a cartridge from the bag expecting the store owner to be surprised. It was a Dragon Emblem cartridge in a black case unlike the normal copies sold in Japan. As I handed the package to him, the store owner opened and closed his eyes in disbelief as he examined the package closely.

“Dragon Emblem? But this is...?”



There was only one reason the store owner was surprised at the familiar Dragon Emblem logo.

The case was in Korean...

“Is this really a Korean version of Dragon Emblem?”

“You can turn it on if you have any doubts.”

The store owner inserted the cartridge into a family console with a slightly trembling hand. Yuki made a questioning face at the Dragon Emblem cartridge from my bag and turned her eyes to the TV screen. And moments later as the familiar Dragon Emblem logo appeared on the screen in Korean, the owner exclaimed as if he had seen a miracle.

“It... it’s Korean!! Korean~!! Wow~ I can’t be dreaming? Am I?”

Seeing the store owner dance in happiness as if he was a kid again, I felt that I repaid just a little bit of the kindness he’d shown me when I was in his store. It was because of the store owner that I found myself enamored with the Dragon Warrior series and remembered when he had given me a free copy of “Ice 2 Special” that he programmed himself. (Of course, the game was riddled with bugs, so I had to go back several times to have it fixed. Thinking back on it, I’m wondering if he used me as a free beta tester.)

“I felt a little disappointed when I heard that the developer of Dragon Emblem was a Korean, and there wasn’t a Korean version of the game. Seeing a Korean version of Dragon Emblem truly makes me ecstatic. Did you translate the texts yourself?”

“Of course...”

After responding, I glanced at Yuki before continuing.

“Because I am the developer of Dragon Emblem.”

Contrary to my expectations, Yuki was the first to have a reaction. She must’ve gotten the gist of what I was saying from studying Korean for a year.

“What!!??”

“Did you really make Dragon Emblem?”

“Yeah... Sorry for hiding it from you...”

“Then you beating the game in one try in the event was because....?”

“Well, I created the stages so I knew exactly how to clear the game.”

“Oh my god...”

Yuki looked at me with a completely enthralled expression. The store owner was making the same face.

“So you really are the developer of Dragon Emblem?”

“Sorry for the late introduction. I’m Kang Junhyuk, currently working at Mintendo. The latest game I released was...”

“Could it be Psychic Battle?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Of course I know this!! I even flew to Japan to get a hold of the title knowing a Korean developer made it!! Wow~ I can’t believe you’re in my store... Where is my pen...”

The owner started looking around for a paper and pen.

“You... really don’t have to do this.”

“Are the 30 cartridges inside your bag all Dragon Emblem copies?”

“Yes. It would be difficult for me to translate Psychic Battle to Korean since it belongs to Mintendo.”

“Keuh~ Is that so. It’s a pity, but I’m mighty satisfied with a Korean version of Dragon Emblem... I have to ask. Does this copy have a data deleting system as well?”

“It is implemented into the game to keep the integrity of its history, but I added a data recovery function in the cartridge.”

“Alright. Now how should I go about selling this.”

“Actually, the reason I came here wasn’t to sell my cartridges to you.”

“Then...?”

“Are you interested in being the first game publisher in Korea?”

“Publ... What did you say?”

&

My plan was simple. I would start the first video game publishing company with the owner of Mintra Computers, whom I had a bond with from my childhood. Publishing games entailed importing the software from abroad and acquiring the appropriate licensing for it before selling the game domestically. However, an official channel of distribution for games was non-existent in Korea. It couldn’t even be said that there was a video game industry at all as the

country was littered with street vendors selling imported copies.

Korean console users could only try and guess what the Japanese text meant as they slowly inched their way through the game. The only relief to them was the English version of a few games which they could somewhat understand.

The reaction of the store owner wasn't exaggerated at all since the first Korean versions of games would arrive much later in the Super Family era.

“So what you want us to do is to establish a publishing company to translate foreign games into Korean and create an official channel of distribution?”

“Yes.”

# Chapter 64

---

This idea was actually conceived by the store owner himself. In 1991, a group of amateur programmers from Mintra would acquire the official license for ‘Princess Make’ from the Japanese company Kainic, and translate it into Korean.

“I have several friends who can code. Of course, they aren’t as good as you.”

Yes. I was aiming for them in the first place.

I suppressed my smile and gave my full attention to the store owner. Although Yuki couldn’t understand Korean well, she understood that we were talking about business and patiently waited for me.

“I’m interested in this concept, but there are parts that I’m concerned about.”

“What are your concerns?”

“The Korean market is the main problem. We can’t predict sales anytime soon even with a Korean version of games because the market is unpredictable.”

“I’m aware of that.”

“What software company would give us the license in this situation?”

“There will be at least one company that will.”

“It wouldn’t be easy unless they were one of the leading figures in the video game industry. What company do you have in mind?”

“Pentagon Soft.”

“Could you be talking about the Pentagon Soft that developed Final Frontier?”

“Yes.”

“Eyy~ You must be joking. Why would a major league software company that sold over 150,000 copies in Japan and America be interested in giving a license to Korea where even 1,000 sales would be unpredictable.”

“I’m close with a high ranking executive from Pentagon.”

“Even if they were in a high position, would they make a high-risk gamble like this?”

He saw my mouth teeter upwards during the conversation and an unbelievable idea must’ve flashed across his mind as he asked.

“Are you familiar with the president?”

“Well, something like that.

I was the president...

Yuki was looking back and forth between the owner and me with curious eyes. But now the owner's expression was turning from surprise to fear.

“You don't have to worry about the funds. Until you start profiting from the sales, I can provide you with the money.”

“Wow. My deceased father appeared in my dreams last night saying good things will happen to me; it really came true...”

From this point on, the conversation went smoothly. The owner agreed to gather every software developer and businessmen that he knew and contact me again.

“If this works out, we will be able to acquire licenses from other companies, right? Perhaps Super Mario from Nintendo, or the Ise series from Phoenix Soft... “

“I don't see a reason why we can't.”

As long as one had capital, the sky would be the limit. Companies would be diving in left and right to give us the license if we offered



more than the expected profits from the sales. Although this was a high-risk venture, I wanted to make this idea into reality. The various masterpieces that I had enjoyed as a child would be translated into Korean for the Korean populace to enjoy...

This little action of mine might the possibility to completely overturn the future of gaming.

“Then, what should we now?”

Nervousness and fear would follow with going out of one's comfort zone. The owner asked me with a slightly trembling voice. In the past, the company Mintra Soft that he founded with his colleagues would disappear from the gaming industry due to illegally releasing 'Princess Make 3' without the appropriate licenses.

They would do whatever they could to stay afloat but eventually went bankrupt from the lack of profits. The store owner's dream of bringing widespread recognition to masterpieces would evaporate into thin air... And I couldn't meet him again after this incident.

I analyzed the owner's face for awhile before opening my mouth.

“Is there something like a professional game magazine in Korea?”

“No. There is a technology magazine. But as for a game magazine...”

From what I knew, the first game magazine wouldn't be published until the 90's. It was still too early... Giving the customers the right information was what needed to be done.

'Let's start here.'

&

"Then we'll publish the first dedicated Video Game magazine."

"You meant we should start a videogame magazine instead of a game publishing company?"

"No, we have to do both. But first, we have to change the perception about games. You do something like handing games out for free when you sell your consoles, right?"

"Ah, that's... I'm embarrassed to say this but yes. If I don't offer any incentive, no one would be buying."

"That's exactly why we have to change the perspective of game consoles to a positive light. You'll have to temporarily give up Mintra computers while we start this project."

"Hah... This is really... I'm changing my job just like this."

"How long are you going to be a slave to your customers and offer

free games just so they would buy your product? Come establish a company with me that will be set up by the gamers, for the gamers in Korea.”

Hey, this was similar to what Steve Jobs said to the vice president of Coca Cola. After hearing my words, the owner seemed to have an epiphany.

“Keuheuk... for the gamers... Alright. If a game developer as good as you is willing to work with me, there’s no reason not to take a gamble. Anyhow, I haven’t got the slightest clue on how to start a game magazine.”

“Have you heard of Japan’s FamiTong magazine?”

“Ah, of course, I did.”

“We will model ours in a similar style to that. There will be a section about the latest news in the market, as well as the reviews for the latest games. Our main focus for the magazine will be reporting on the latest news.”

“I have one question. To establish a startup of this scale, we’ll need a sizable amount of capital and bilingual Japanese speakers to write reviews about the newest Japanese games. And we’ll also need a building to print the magazine...”

“When I return to Japan next week, I will wire you 10,000,000 Wons (\$10,000) as a series A investment. You can use this money

to acquire a new office and the necessary equipment for printing.”

“10,000,000 Wons!? You’re sending an enormous sum like that to me so easily. Are you not worried about me running away with the money?”

“If you run off with a mere 10,000,000 Wons when an opportunity to make a larger amount presented itself to you, your value as a human being would only be 10,000,000 Wons. It would only be a slight hindrance to me to find another person to be my business partner.”

In response, the owner swallowed and nodded his head up and down. Although I might have sounded a bit harsh, I trusted the integrity of the man I knew as a child. He was one of the last ones fighting on when his company was losing money. I will not let that happen to you again.

“If we start a new magazine, we’ll need an event to peak the interests of readers and draw them in. The PC magazine also did an event for their subscribers.”

“You possess that special ‘something’ already.”

“Me? What do you mean? I don’t have anything even remotely interesting to offer..”

“No. I just gave them to you.”

I gestured to the Dragon Emblem cartridges on top of the table and smiled.

“That...?”

“You will put these up as prizes to give out over the next 6 months.”

“Ah~ A brand like Dragon Emblem will definitely be able to attract gamers. And a Korean copy at that...”

“6 months later, I will have the Korean version of Final Frontier available for you.”

After hearing my words, he grabbed my hands tightly and spoke,

“Mr. Junhyuk... I will do my best!”

&

4 P.M

After a long day of discussing the specifics of setting up the business with the owner, I left Yuki in the Mintra Computer shop and headed out to meet my younger self.

As I entered through the glass door of the convenience store, I

was greeted with the narrow aisles stacked full of various snacks. Amongst them were snacks that would withstand the test of time and still be in production in 2015.

Shrimp chips and ‘Potato King’... The Indian rice snack that went with milk to produce a wonderful combination, banana punch, etc... There were several that faded from my memories that I saw again as well.

‘But, nothing will beat this.’

I looked at the children’s gift sets stacked in the corner and grinned.

“Hello~”

A lady walked into the cash register from the adjoining room as I called out.

“Welcome.”

“I’ll have the gift set number six.”

I pointed to the largest box with the most variety of snacks. It was 5,000 Wons compared to the 2,000~3,000 Won price ranges of other gift sets,

‘It’s easy to pick gifts because I know what I liked back then.’

The cashier beamed as she rang up the gift set.

“Do you need anything else?”

“Ah... do you have a pack of spam?”

“Of course~”

“Then I’ll have the biggest [pack of spam](#) as well.”

(TL Note: Spam is considered a luxury item in Korea and is unbelievably expensive compared to America. People gift spam sets on holidays)

I remember hesitating to buy the expensive pack of spam that I would eat maybe once a year or so. This would be a great breakfast for my father. As I took out my wallet to pay, a little girl scurried into the store and grabbed a bag of Cheetos off the shelf.

“Youngnam, I told you not to touch things in the store.”

“But mom, I won the coupon for a free bag from the Cheetos bag that I ate earlier!”

‘She’s exactly the way I remembered her.’

I secretly grinned at the little Youngnam that I haven’t seen since

I was a kid. A while later, after completing the transaction I ripped the rappers off and hid a Gamboy in between the bags of chips. After meticulously rewrapping the box, I prepared the spam set along with an envelope of money and a letter for my parents.

At this moment, I saw the little Junhyuk pop his head inside the store.

“Oh? Mister, you really came?”



# Chapter 65

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“I promised you that I’d be here. But did you keep your promise with me?”

“Of course, I bought 50,000 Wons worth of beef. My mom grilled me about where I got it from, hehe.”

Haha... My mother was the type of person to get suspicious if I brought 50,000 Wons worth of food home.

“Good job. Here is your reward kiddo.”

“A gift set!! Wow!”

“And give this spam package to your mother...”

“Thank you... But who are you, mister? I asked my mom yesterday, and she said she’s never met you before.”

“Mmm... you can say I’m a distant relative.”

“Ah... Then should I tell my mom a relative gave these to me?”

“Yeah. I’ll get going then. Listen to your parents and work hard in your studies, kiddo.”

“Eh? You’re leaving so soon? My mom is home right now...”

“It’s fine. Take care~”

I petted his head a few times and moved my footsteps to the Mintra Computer shop where Yuki was.

&

Ugh, I skipped lunch again while talking to the owner of Mintra about the business. I felt guilty about not buying Yuki a proper meal since we landed on Korean soil; I hurriedly opened the door to Mintra Computers.

“Sorry, Yuki. You must be starving?”

“Ah... You came, Junhyuk?”

Yuki who was sitting with the owner turned her head as she heard my voice. Her shining smile was plastered with bits of black bean sauce everywhere.

“The owner ordered takeout for me. These noodles are amazing!? What was it called... Ja Jien Myun? You should try some!”

“Oh ho, you came back earlier than I expected. Should I order one more plate?”

Street stall foods yesterday and Chinese takeout today... I was glad she liked it; I smiled and glanced at Yuki.

“You should order orange chicken and dumplings while you’re at it.”

I was getting hungry as well, so I didn’t refuse his offer and took a seat. A while later, a Chinese delivery man knocked on the door holding a plate of black bean noodles and the side dishes.

“Wow, having food with one phone call is amazing... I wish I had something like this back in Japan.”

Yuki stared in awe at the food delivery process. Subsequently, as the plate of orange chicken was placed onto the table, Yuki’s eyes glistened in anticipation.

“Yuki, what did you say to the owner for him to order take out for you?”

“I just... When I rubbed my stomach and made a somber face, he ordered it for me... Like this?”

As Yuki pouted her lips and looked at me with puppy eyes, I couldn’t stop myself from bursting out in laughter. The owner saw this exchange and chuckled as he opened his mouth.

“She kept looking at me with those eyes. How could I not get her something to eat, haha?”

Really, Yuki wouldn't starve no matter where she was on this planet.

It was at this moment. Without any warning, the owner poured the sauce on to the orange chicken!!

Ack!! He poured a steaming cup of sauce on the fried chicken!! This was not a way to show respect to fried food!! But the owner looked at us with a proud expression and spoke.

“Orange chicken goes best with the sauce on top.”

Before it was too late, I hurriedly moved the unaffected ones to a new plate.

“Hmm!?”

The owner gave me a long hard stare. We might have been thinking the same thing at this moment: ‘He won't do...’

“Wow... what kind of meal is this?”

Yuki couldn't contain her curiosity as she grabbed a chicken coated with the sauce and bit down on it.

“Mr. Junhyuk, there are too many delicious foods in Korea.”

“She just said it was delicious, right? See~ Pouring sauce over the chicken is the best way to eat it~”

No, I can't agree with that at all.

&

Moments later, darkness had already set in when we stepped foot outside the shop.

“Then I'll contact you again once I return to Japan. Please use the Dragon Emblem cartridges as prizes for the raffles for the time being.”

“Yes, I will take care of it no problem.”

The owner waited with us until a taxi arrived, and waved us off until we were out of view.

“Ah~ I'm full. Oh yeah, where did you go earlier?”

“Mmm, it's a secret.”

“Hmph, You didn't tell me you made Dragon Emblem, and now you're hiding something else from me.”

“No, it’s nothing like that.”

At that moment, the taxi driver cleared his throat and carefully asked me a question.

“Excuse me, where would you like to go?”

“Ah... I’m sorry. The North Mountain please.”

“Yes, sir.”

As we were traveling through the busy streets, I looked out the window and saw an old man lighting a cigar on the back of a public transportation bus. Wow... No matter how unrestricted smoking was in this period, I couldn’t believe that someone was lighting a cigar in a bus full of people. The 80s and 90s were the definition of heaven for smokers. Observing the insides of the taxi, I saw a black mark from cigarette burns in the back of the seat.

How much was a single cigarette here... 200 Wons? 300 Wons?

I used to run errands to the store to buy my father’s cigarettes and alcohol...

“What are you thinking about?”

“Nothing much, just some old memories.”

“Hmm...”

Yuki stayed silent.

&

Initially, I tried to get to the peak of North Mountain with the taxi, but the vehicles of in the 80s period couldn't climb steep slopes. Yuki wanted to walk to the top to enjoy the scenery, so we got off the bottom of the mountain and slowly began our hike.

“Eughhh~ I love everything about Korea except for the cold weather. I'm freezing to death right now.”

“Yeah, Japan should be warmer right now.”

“That's true, but...”

“But?”

“I'm really having fun. I knew I made the right decision when I boarded that plane. When I return home, I'll have so many things to tell my mom: that I enjoyed Korea so much, and that I want her to come with me next time.”

To be honest, I've never given Yuki a proper tour, yet she still followed me around without any complaints. Last night, while Yuki was fast asleep from walking around all day, I discovered a

travel guidebook while I was organizing her carrier. The guidebook showcased various landmarks and attractions of Seoul, with star ratings hand-drawn by Yuki next to the locations.

Amongst them, she had given a 7-star to a night hiking trail.

‘She gave this 7-stars. I’m guessing she wants to visit this place the most?’

I closed the guidebook and stepped out to the terrace to get a view of Namsan tower before turning my head towards the sleeping Yuki.

&

The Namsan trail of 1988 was completely different from the trail I knew in 2015. A walking path only existed up until halfway up the mountain; light posts were the only guide to the peak of the mountain.

‘Ugh, If I knew it was going to be like this, I would’ve taken her to the 63rd building instead. We could have taken the elevator to the top of the building and see a magnificent view.’

At that moment, a large object passed by my head. This was the Namsan cable car.

‘Oh lordy!! I missed something like that!! Why didn’t I think of that earlier?’



As I was crying my heart out, Yuki who was walking beside me squeezed my hand.

“It’s a bit tiring... But it’s nice walking together with you.”

“Ah... Really?”

Since she said that, I had no choice but to grit my teeth and make it to the top... I couldn’t start whining in front of Yuki, could I? I held her hand and resolutely marched to the top. An hour or so had passed. The peak of Namsan mountain finally came into view.

“We’re here...”

I let out a big sigh and looked around my surrounding and saw a plethora of people enjoying the view here. Yuki was staring at the starlit city with unblinking eyes.

“Mr. Junhyuk.”

“Yeah?”

“We’re... dating right?”

Shocked by her sudden question, I stared at her speechless. In truth, we couldn’t be considered an official couple. But I wasn’t completely blind, I knew she felt some affection for me by

watching her actions.

Yet if I were to marry Yuki in this time period... What choice would I have to make when I returned to 2015?

“Why aren’t you saying anything?”

As I stammered looking for the right words to say, Yuki asked again with a worried expression. My memories with Yuki beginning from when I met her to now flashed through my head. The more I stayed silent, the more her face grew sullen.

“Mr. Junhyuk...?”

“I’m sorry...”

A flash of disbelief appeared in her eyes as I uttered these words. I stared at her for a short moment before continuing.

“I was going to bring this up earlier, but I missed the timing.”

In response, Yuki let out an inaudible sigh of relief and placed her head on my chest as she muttered.

“I thought my heart was tearing apart. You idiot...”

Yuki bursted into tears as her tiny shoulders heaved against my

chest. Ah... I did not plan this at all. I wrapped my arms around her and gazed up into the sky.

“Oh... it’s snowing.”

Flurries of white were descending from the sky. But Yuki who was buried in my chest seemed to be embarrassed of her tears and buried her face further and responded.

“You’re lying...”

“No... I’m telling you, it’s snowing!”

“I’m not falling for that.”

Despite her insistence, the people in our surroundings bursted into chatter at the sight of snow.

“It’s a snowfall~”

“Wow~ The snow should be piling up quickly at this rate.”

Yuki responded to the exclamations of the people beside us and peeked out from my chest. As soon as we made eye contact, she buried her head again. I couldn’t help bursting into laughter and gently separated myself from her.

After eyeing her closed eyes for some time, I matched my mouth to her opened lips.

# Chapter 66

---

“Yuki, it’s almost time to go...”

“Alright, just give me a minute to finish checking out.”

After Yuki walked out of the airport mall with bags full of gifts for family and friends, she asked with a worried expression.

“We aren’t late, are we?”

“We should be able to board the terminal bus if we leave now.”

I grabbed several of her shopping bags and hurriedly rushed to the terminal with Yuki following closely behind. In the end, we were able to board the bus with a dangerous 1 minute margin.

“Hah... Hah... What a relief, I thought we were going to miss the plane.”

“Yeah. Getting up late this morning almost spiraled into a disaster for us...”

“Hmph... Who bothered me last night so I couldn’t sleep...”

Uh... Who was that...

Yuki pretended to ignore me for a moment before breaking into a grin after meeting my eyes. Below her smiling face was a small necklace hanging on her neck. That was the commemorative key chain that couples often bought from the Namsan trail.

“Are you really going to wear that?”

“Yes.”

“You were supposed to leave that behind...”

“But I still want to keep it with me. I’ll unlock the key if we ever happen to break up.”

“Is that what you say the day after we started dating?”

As I gave her a playful tap on her forehead, she stuck her tongue out.

“Yeah, you’re right. Sorry.”

After walking with her to the airport lounge, I handed her the plane ticket and opened my mouth.

“You’ll be fine by yourself now, right?”

“Of course I will.”

“Make sure to give me a call after you land.”

I wanted to board the same plane with her if circumstances would allow it, but traveling by train from Tokyo where Yuki lived to Kyoto was very inefficient, so I decided to send her off to the Narita airport before me.

“Thank you for bringing me along with you.”

“What are you saying? I never even gave you a proper tour.”

“Then you can show me around the next time.”

“Yeah, let’s do that.”

&

The next day.

In the middle of looking through my work documents at my desk, I heard a light knock followed by Morita poking his head through the door. Morita greeted me with a bright smile on his face; his demeanor underwent a 180 shift from when I had last talked with him;

“Director Kang, how was your trip?”

“Everything went well. Ah... you came at the perfect time. I wanted to have a meal with you before I left.”

In response, Morita scratched his head with an awkward expression and spoke.

“I thought you were going to show me some concept illustrations after your trip.”

Morita was showing an incredible amount of interest since my new game was themed around young school girls. He had already made his mind up about leaving Mintendo at this month’s end.

There were many who felt disappointed at Morita’s decision to leave, but only a handful had tried to talk him out of leaving. The reason for that was Mintendo was simply overflowing with game developers.

In a culture where all the attention was focused on growing household titles like Super Marigee, Donkey Kom, The Legend of Kirin, etc... opportunities for Mortia to do what he was born to do, creating visuals of beautiful, fully developed girls (or undeveloped), were sparse. And Morita understood this better than anyone else.

“We should eat together since it’s almost time for lunch. I’ll show you the documents then.”



“Ah, of course,~!!”

A while later.

As I was stepping out of the headquarters building along with Morita, a familiar voice rang out from behind us.

“Oii!! Morita!! Director Kang~!!”

Hayashi was running towards us from the main lobby.

“I was heading to your office when I heard that you left for lunch, so...”

“Would you like to join us?”

“Of course. I also have something to tell you, Director Kang.”

I could feel a sense of determination from Hayashi who was fixing his glasses after that frantic run.

&

“What? You’re also going to quit!?”

Morita’s startled cry rang around the small interior of the ramen shop near the company where I frequented.

“Quiet!! You fool, there could be other employees here.”

“Ah, I’m sorry. I was shocked... So you’re moving to Pentagon Soft as well?”

Hayashi looked over at me and asked.

“Director Kang, do you still have an opening for me there?”

“Of course. You can come over anytime you want. But I must ask, what made you change your mind? Last week you said it was too early for you.”

“That’s... I realized I would never be able to be promoted to head my own project as long as Mr. Shige was above me.”

Hayashi continued as he turned his gaze to Morita.

“This man over here was the only one I could connect with; we had such a great time building Psychic Battle together. I felt that I would have no one else in the company after he left.”

No matter what the reasons he came up with were, he was following his friend in the end...

But this was actually a great opportunity for me. I knew I would be able to work with these two without any problems.

“Then, since you two seemed to have made up your minds, shall we get started?”

I took out the concept illustrations from my bag and placed them on the table. Although there were only ten pages, Morita snatched the pictures away as soon as he laid his eyes upon them. Hayashi also looked over at the illustrations.

“ ‘A journey without me?’ Don’t you think the title is a bit depressing?”

I answered with a grin as I sipped on a warm cup of green tea.

“Look at the illustration first.”

Hayashi looked back at the illustration plans and subsequently widened his eyes in confusion.

“Director Kang, there seems to be several dozen background images and character configurations. I don’t think the current specs of the Mintendo hardware can support this level, with or without a specialty chip...”

Morita also chimed in with his own opinion.

“The... the background looks like it was modeled after the city of Tokyo. Could the family console really support details this

specific? On top of that, although it would be easy to physically draw the images out, generating the pixel graphics will take several weeks at a conservative estimate.”

As expected, these two professionals were able to discern the key points after a cursory scan of the plan. But they haven’t seen the important page yet...

“Did you guys take a look at the platform concept?”

“A platform?”

The duo tilted their heads in confusion as I pointed to the page.

“SFC...? It’s the first time I’ve heard of it.”

“It’s an acronym I came up with this morning. It stands for the super family computer. I plan to launch ‘A journey without me’ as the launching title for a new generation of Mintendo consoles.

“Whaat??”

&

Hypothetically speaking, if one person in a relationship was dying, who would feel the most pain?

The person leaving their loved one alone and departing from this world>

Or the person who is left?

‘The central theme for ‘A journey without me’ will be based around this seemingly simple hypothetical question.’

Although the specific plots weren’t written yet, I would describe ‘A journey without me’ as being more focused towards the visual effects and the creativity of the illustrator rather than a full on dating simulator.

Amongst the three female characters in the game, only one would make it to the end. The game itself would be divided into three drastically different storylines depending on the choices of the user.

The first scenario was that before the ending scene where one of the lovers would pass away, a heroine would be predetermined depending on the big and small events that occurred early on. The second scenario was that after the death of two the female characters, the main character would be left with the last remaining girl and live happily ever after. And the final scenario involved the death of the player. After that...

‘The highlight of ‘A journey without me’ will be the third scenario.’

After the character controlled by the user dies, they would be able to experience the game through the eyes of their lover. The accumulation of the “memories” gathered throughout the game would determine the nuanced reactions of the girl.

“Director Kang, this story line is a little too...”

Morita’s eyes were moist after merely reading the script. Hayashi also seemed to be effected as he blinked multiple times and furiously turned the pages.

You... you... shouldn’t be taking your feelings out on the paper.

In the end, Hayashi was forced to covertly wipe his eyes under his glasses.

“So what do you guys think?”

Morita who was drying his eyes with a tissue asked a question in return.

“Director Kang, who wrote these scenarios.”

“Why? You don’t like it?”

“Not at all. I think this game will be an instant hit if the plot lines develop according to the blueprint. But the time it would take the write various events for the three heroines, make changes to the

appearances of the characters because the game plays out over the course of a few years and create a glum visual effect for the ending of the final scene would... Huup! In addition, making changes to the background to account for the passage of time... Ahh!!!”

His face turned ashen as he envisioned the amount of work that laid ahead for this project. As for me, I was sipping on my cup of green tea as I asked Morita a question.

“Don’t worry. We have plenty of time, so we can really create a top quality game without hurry. You said you would love to create pixelated girls until the day you die.”

“What I meant was... Director Kang, that’s...”

“I will grant you your wish, Mr. Morita.”

I let out a smirk and turned my attention towards Hayashi who was in the middle of thinking about the tasks he would be in charge of.

Compared to other games, generating pixel art for graphic novel games was easy. There weren’t any on-hit effects to worry about like in a shooting game, and a combat A.I for enemy soldiers wasn’t needed.

It was about whether we could match the storyline with the appropriate images depending on the choice of the user.

Although, the time it would take to fine tune the number of different scenarios from 'A journey without me' would be staggering...



